

# ESEA REAUTHORIZATION: SCHOOL TURNAROUND

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HEARING  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS  
SECOND SESSION  
ON  
EXAMINING ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY ACT (ESEA)  
REAUTHORIZATION, FOCUSING ON SCHOOL TURNAROUND

APRIL 13, 2010

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## ESEA REAUTHORIZATION: SCHOOL TURNAROUND

TUESDAY, APRIL 13, 2010

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:12 p.m. in Room SD-430, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Tom Harkin, Chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Harkin, Dodd, Bingaman, Murray, Casey, Hagan, Merkley, Franken, Bennet, Enzi, Alexander, Burr, Isakson, and Murkowski.

### OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR HARKIN

The CHAIRMAN. The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions will please come to order.

I would like to thank all of you for being here today as we continue to discuss reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

In our two previous hearings, we gained valuable insight into the need for education reform in order for our country to remain globally competitive. We heard from Education Secretary Arne Duncan about the Obama administration's views on how to best meet this challenge.

This afternoon we will hear from experts on turning around under-performing schools. Without question, turning around chronically under-performing schools, schools that consistently fail to educate the children entrusted to their care, is one of the great moral economic and civil rights imperatives of our day.

The Department of Education estimates that there are approximately 5,000 of these chronically under-performing schools across the country. That is about 5 percent of our total public schools. These schools are attended largely by minority and low-income students. Mr. Bob Balfanz of Johns Hopkins, who is one of our witnesses, has identified almost 2,000 high schools with graduation rates of less than 60 percent. Sixty-nine percent of all African-American and 63 percent of all Hispanic dropouts come from these 2,000 schools.

Turning around chronically low-performing schools is a daunting challenge for States, school districts, administrators, and teachers. These schools are often the most under-resourced and, as a consequence, often lack the capacity to implement reform strategies. They are often also filled with students who face major challenges

to success, including poverty or limited English proficiency. These schools need more resources than the average school, yet typically have fewer resources.

Despite these challenges, a number of schools, and in some cases entire school districts, have had remarkable success in improving student achievement. We need to learn from these powerful turnaround examples. For example, in 2006, the Harvard School of Excellence in Chicago ranked among the 10 worst elementary schools in the State of Illinois. After implementing a reform strategy focused on strong leadership, highly trained and effective teachers, curriculum changes, improved accountability measures, and school cultural transformation, the number of students meeting State testing standards increased by 25 percent in just 2 years. Now, this is just one example of how school turnaround has been done. We need to scale these up and implement this all over the country, and it will be a priority focus in our ESEA reauthorization.

Our witnesses today will share their experiences in implementing school improvement strategies that have resulted in sustainable student achievement. Their testimony will be extremely valuable to us as we work together on a bipartisan basis to craft an ESEA reauthorization designed to get America's lowest performing schools back on track.

I will now turn to my very capable partner in this reauthorization, Senator Enzi, for his opening statement, and then we will introduce our witnesses.

#### OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ENZI

Senator ENZI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank you for your diligent work in moving us along on fixing No Child Left Behind, which we are calling the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It is an old version of the name, and I am sure we are going to have a new name here before long.

We have worked to create a diverse witness list to share best practices and research with this committee, and I look forward to learning more from each of you this afternoon. The knowledge and practice that you bring to the table will help us, as we move forward, to develop legislation that builds upon what we have learned from No Child Left Behind and fixes what has not been working.

There are two issues I will focus on as we reauthorize ESEA related to school improvement and turnaround activities. First and foremost is the impact these mandated Federal turnaround models could have on rural and frontier schools and school districts. The second is the research base used to determine whether these models have been proven to be effective at turning around low-performing schools.

Rural and frontier schools and school districts are unique and often need unique solutions to their unique problems. To illustrate the size of Wyoming, I often tell people it is one of the big States, but we only have 14 cities in the State of Wyoming where the people exceeds the elevation.

[Laughter.]

This means that we have a lot of families and students spread out over a very large area. Wyoming is lucky to have many super-

intendents, principals, and teachers like Dr. Mitchell who are dedicated to serving students in small and rural areas across my State.

Now, why are these students so spread out? It is because our towns are a long way apart. We do have a policy in Wyoming that grade school students should not have to travel more than 40 miles by bus each way and junior high students should not have to travel more than 60 miles each way. That means we have schools with as few as one student and some of them as big as 15 students that are out in the very frontier areas.

I am very concerned that requiring school districts to use one of the four school turnaround models for schools identified for school improvement will adversely affect rural or frontier schools. I support accountability and believe it is important to identify the poorest performing title I schools and require specific actions to spur dramatic improvement in those schools.

That said, some flexibility needs to be given to rural and frontier schools that simply cannot meet these strict Federal requirements. Rural and frontier schools need to identify and adopt turnaround strategies that will have a dramatic impact and increase student achievement, but I do not believe that all of these strategies can be identified or mandated from Washington.

Many schools in Wyoming do not have access to turnaround partners such as the New Visions for Public Schools and do not have charter operators, such as Green Dot, that are either willing or able to open schools in remote areas. It is often difficult to recruit principals and teachers to rural areas who will stay for an extended period of time.

Let me be clear that I am not proposing to give rural and frontier schools a free pass. Strategies mandated from Washington will simply not solve the problems facing these schools. I believe it is incumbent upon us to work with State and local superintendents, principals, and teachers from the rural States, school districts, and schools to find options that would work when balanced with an appropriate amount of flexibility from the Federal level.

I also believe it is important for Congress to understand the research behind each of the turnaround models. It is my understanding from the research community that the knowledge base for how to turn around low-performing schools is pretty shallow. The scientific evidence or research for the four interventions proposed by school improvement grants is, at best, sketchy. Again, this causes me concern because there is no research on turnaround efforts in rural schools and school districts. If we are going to mandate interventions from the Federal level, we need to be clear about why we are mandating such reforms and what evidence we have for our actions. Otherwise, I worry we will not be learning from No Child Left Behind and are just repeating our mistakes.

I want to welcome all of our witnesses and thank them for being with us today to share your experiences. I look forward to learning more from each of you today and the efforts you have undertaken to improve academic achievement outcomes for children across the country.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Enzi. We will leave the record open at this point for any statements by any other Senators.

Now I will introduce our witnesses so we can get going. First, we have, starting from my left, working to the right, Joel Klein, the Chancellor of the New York City Public Schools, the largest school district in the entire United States. Mr. Klein became New York City Schools Chancellor in July 2002 after serving in a variety of high-level positions in both government and business, including the Assistant Attorney General in the Antitrust Division of the U.S. Department of Justice where I first met Mr. Klein. As Chancellor, he oversees over 1,600 schools with 1.1 million students, 136,000 employees, and a \$21 billion operating budget. Mr. Klein will share the school turnaround approaches he has used and provide lessons learned at the district level.

Next we have Beverly Donohue, Vice President of Policy and Research at New Visions for Public Schools in New York City. Ms. Donohue has extensive experience from New York City government where she held positions as Chief Financial Officer for the public school system and as Deputy Director of the New York City Office of Management and Budget. She will discuss the work she has done with New Visions, a school turnaround partner to more than 76 public schools serving more than 34,000 students in New York City.

Next we will hear from Mr. Robert Balfanz, who I mentioned earlier, the Co-Director of the Talent Development middle grades and high schools programs and co-operator of Baltimore Talent Development High School, an innovation high school operated in partnership with the Baltimore City Public Schools. Dr. Balfanz has published widely on secondary school reform, high school dropouts, early warning systems, and instructional interventions in high-poverty schools. Dr. Balfanz will share his expertise on implementing reform in high-poverty schools and on addressing the problems of dropouts in middle and high schools.

Next we will hear from Timothy Mitchell, Superintendent of Schools in Chamberlain School District 7-1, located in Chamberlain, SD. Dr. Mitchell has both researched and practiced innovative leadership in rural school districts. He was one of nine rural superintendents selected by the American Association of School Administrators to meet with Secretary Duncan to provide feedback on improvement strategies in rural areas. Dr. Mitchell will speak to the unique challenges faced by rural schools in implementing school turnaround strategies.

Not to be outdone by my friend from Wyoming, I went to a grade school where in one room we had kindergarten, first, second. In the next room, we had the third, fourth, and fifth, and in the next room, the "big room," as we called it, was sixth, seventh and eighth. In my eighth grade class, there were six of us. That is pretty darned rural.

Finally, Marco Petruzzi will wrap up our testimony, the CEO of Green Dot Public Schools in Los Angeles, CA. Green Dot has opened 18 successful charter high schools in the highest-need areas of Los Angeles, including eight as part of its turnaround of Locke High School in Watts. Prior to joining Green Dot, Mr. Petruzzi was

a partner at Bain and Company where he led a pro bono consulting project to develop a model for the transformation of overcrowded, under-performing urban public schools. He will speak about district improvement models that involve charter schools and the conditions that are necessary for such efforts to be successful.

I thank all of you for your history of involvement in education. I thank you all for being here today from long distances away and for your being willing to get involved in this most important bill that we are doing, that is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Again, let me start with my longtime friend and the Chancellor of the New York City Schools, Mr. Joel Klein. Welcome back, Mr. Klein.

**STATEMENT OF JOEL I. KLEIN, CHANCELLOR, NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, NEW YORK, NY**

Mr. KLEIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a privilege to be here. Senator Enzi, members of the committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to discuss the reauthorization of the ESEA and to talk about New York City's approach to school turnaround, something we have been engaged in—

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Klein, before you start, would you reset that for 7? We will set it for about 7 minutes, but if you go over, do not worry about it. I will say at the outset, all your statements will be made a part of the record in their entirety. If you could sum it up in 5, 6, 7, 8. If you go over 8 or 9 minutes, I will get a little nervous.

Mr. KLEIN. It will not be the first time you have done this to me. So go right ahead. You are familiar with my history.

In New York City, we have no school that is where the people are higher than the altitude, or vice versa.

Over the past 8 years, we have been engaged, in New York City, in a very rigorous turnaround strategy, and I commend the President for setting out this challenge. No Child Left Behind brought long overdue accountability to public education and it cast a spotlight, an important spotlight, on the shameful achievement gap between our African-American and Latino students on the one hand and our White students on the other that really has gone unaddressed for generations. The law rightfully demanded that all children, regardless of background and demographics, have access to a high quality education. I believe the Senate, as well as the other elected officials who brought us together in a bipartisan fashion to get NCLB done, deserve great credit.

That said, as Senator Enzi said, there is widespread consensus that NCLB can and must be improved. Its focus on absolute achievement instead of on student progress labeled many schools as failing even when students were making significant gains. Moreover, it takes years under NCLB before interventions are mandated in struggling schools, and even longer before real restructuring is required. Sometimes as many as 6 or 7 years can go by with missing annual yearly progress, years when a student's future is on the line. NCLB requires very little to be done about it. This has allowed districts like mine to implement so-called restructuring ini-

tiatives that amount to tinkering around the edges while our students are falling through the cracks.

The U.S. Department of Education's Blueprint for ESEA addresses some of these shortcomings, and I commend Secretary Duncan. I believe this is a step in the right direction.

The proposed changes would require schools to show that they are helping students gain ground rather than holding all schools to the same uniform expectations. We have used a system like that in New York City for the past several years, and it has allowed us really to compare apples to apples and recognize schools doing excellent work while serving challenging populations.

I am happy to say I worked closely with Senator Bennet when he was the Denver Superintendent to implement a similar system in Denver, and he was an extraordinary national leader as superintendent in Denver.

It also enables us to identify, when we compare apples to apples, those schools that are persistently low-performing and requires us to make the difficult decision to replace those failing schools with better options.

As part of our overall strategy, replacing failing schools has helped us to get real results in New York City. In 2009, our graduation rate, while still too low, reached an historic high of 63 percent after a decade of stagnation when it was flat. The graduation rate has increased for 8 consecutive years under Mayor Bloomberg. In the past 4 years, from 2005 to 2009, it has gone up by 12.5 points. In New York City, when you are talking about something like that, you are really talking about thousands and thousands of kids. During the same 4-year period, our dropout rate has gone from over 22 percent down to just under 12 percent. These gains have been achieved across all our demographic groups, with our African-American and Latino students making the greatest progress.

Much of the progress reflects the efforts of talented educators who share our belief that the status quo is not good enough in public education. It also demonstrates the commitment of our students and their families who know that when it comes to education, hard work brings great rewards.

Some of the progress, however, reflects effective initiatives to turn around failing schools. And I want to be candid. Those are always more controversial. When we see that a school is not meeting standards in New York, we intervene to support improved outcomes. We have used a variety of strategies, strategies well known to my colleagues, including putting in a new highly trained principal, organizing a large school into small learning communities, providing extensive professional development for our teachers, and introducing mentoring and tutoring services.

Yet, sometimes in some schools, the outcomes do not change or sometimes, unfortunately, conditions deteriorate. As a city and a country, we must then ask—and this is a question I want to ask the committee—when should we stop sending children to a place that is unlikely to prepare them for life beyond high school? When is it simply too immoral to consign students to the prospect of failure by sending them to schools where none of us would ever send our own children? Those are the questions I have asked myself as Chancellor over the past 8 years.

When our best efforts are not working to turn around these failing schools, we must take more dramatic steps, even though they will prove controversial. In New York, we have a solid track record—and there is evidence and there is research to support our work—of replacing low-performing schools with better options. We have worked with New Visions, who you will hear from shortly from Beverly, but with other groups as well.

Our approach to closing schools differs from many other parts of the country. We do not padlock buildings or immediately transfer current students elsewhere. Instead, we gradually phase out school organizations without adding new students until the final class graduates. Simultaneously, we begin to introduce replacement school organizations into the building. That strategy has fundamentally improved the opportunities for our kids.

Since 2002, we phased out 91 schools and replaced them with 400 new schools that are out-performing our other schools citywide. Our new schools have an average graduation rate of 75 percent even though they serve some of the city's highest-need students. That is better than our city average. They often have new leaders, many new teachers, and so forth.

Let me give you a concrete example before I wrap up. In September 2003, we began to phase out the Bushwick High School in Brooklyn, which had a historic under-performance and an abysmal 23 percent graduation rate. Today there are four new schools thriving in that same building with an average graduation rate of 72 percent.

As I have said, there will always be resistance to change at this scale, but sometimes when a school has experienced sustained failure, the only way to transform it is through real and fundamental transformational change. We believe, therefore, that ESEA must include explicit consequences for persistently low-performing schools. Real reform will not occur without this committee's leadership. There are powerful groups that will advocate for the status quo despite abundant evidence that the current system is not getting the job done for too many students.

Mr. Chairman, again, thank you for the opportunity to present to you today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Klein follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOEL I. KLEIN

SUMMARY

Good afternoon Chairman Harkin, Senator Enzi, and committee members.

Thank you for inviting me to discuss the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act ("ESEA") and New York City's approach to school turnaround. We hope lessons learned from our experience can guide other districts as they take up the President's challenge to turn around America's lowest-performing schools.

No Child Left Behind ("NCLB") brought long-overdue accountability to public education and cast a spotlight on a shameful achievement gap that had gone unaddressed for generations. The law rightfully demanded that all children, regardless of background, have access to a high-quality education. You and your colleagues deserve praise for these essential reforms.

That said, there is widespread consensus that NCLB can be improved. Its focus on absolute achievement, instead of progress, labeled many schools as "failing" even when students made significant gains. Moreover, it takes years before interventions are mandated in struggling schools, and even longer before dramatic restructuring is required. Even after 6 years of missing Annual Yearly Progress—years when stu-

dents' futures are on the line—NCLB is vague about required turnaround strategies. This has allowed districts to implement so-called restructuring initiatives that amount to tinkering around the edges while students fall through the cracks.

The U.S. Department of Education's Blueprint for ESEA addresses some of these shortcomings and is a step in the right direction. Proposed changes would require schools to show that they are helping students gain ground rather than holding schools to uniform expectations. We have used such a system in New York for years. It allows us to recognize schools doing excellent work while serving challenging populations. It also enables us to identify schools where persistent low performance necessitates significant interventions, including—in some cases—making the difficult decision to replace failing schools with better options.

As part of our overall strategy, replacing failing schools has helped us get real results. In 2009, the city's graduation rate reached a historic high of 63 percent. After a decade of stagnation, the graduation rate has increased for 8 consecutive years since Mayor Bloomberg assumed responsibility for the city's schools, rising by 12.5 points since 2005 alone. Similarly, the dropout rate has been cut in half since 2005, falling to 11.8 percent. These gains have been achieved across all demographic groups, with African-American and Latino students making the greatest progress.

Much of this progress reflects the efforts of talented educators who share our belief that the status quo is not good enough. It also demonstrates the commitment of students and families, who know that when it comes to education, hard work brings great rewards.

Some of the progress, however, reflects effective initiatives to turn around failing schools. When we see that a school is not meeting student needs, we quickly intervene to support improved outcomes. Various strategies include putting a highly trained new principal in place, organizing the school into small learning communities, providing extensive professional development or introducing mentoring and tutoring services.

Yet at some schools, outcomes do not change or conditions even deteriorate. As a city and a country, we must then ask: When should we stop sending children to a place unlikely to prepare them for life beyond high school? When is it simply immoral to consign students to the prospect of failure by sending them to schools where we would never send our own children?

When our best efforts are not turning around failing schools, we must take more radical steps, even if they prove controversial.

In New York, we have a solid track record of replacing low-performing schools with better options. Our approach to closing schools differs from many other parts of the country. We don't padlock school buildings or immediately transfer current students elsewhere. Instead, we gradually phase out school organizations, without adding new students, until the final class graduates. Simultaneously, we gradually introduce replacement school organizations into the building. This strategy has fundamentally improved opportunities for our students.

Since 2002, we have phased out 91 schools. We replaced them with 400 new schools that are outperforming other schools citywide. Our new high schools have an average graduation rate of 75 percent even though they serve some of the city's highest-need students. These schools have new leaders, many new teachers, distinctive themes and usually a much smaller size—allowing them to provide individualized student supports and build new cultures that are a precondition for turnaround.

I want to give you a concrete example of what this approach means.

In September 2003, we began to phase out Bushwick High School, which had a history of underperformance and an abysmal 23 percent graduation rate. Today, there are four new small schools thriving in that building, with an average graduation rate of 72 percent.

There is always resistance associated with change of this scale. But sometimes, when a school has experienced sustained failure, the only way to transform conditions is through fundamental change. Based on our experience, ESEA must therefore include explicit consequences for persistently low-performing schools, including closing schools after other improvement strategies have failed.

Real reform cannot occur without your leadership. Powerful interest groups continually advocate for the status quo, despite abundant evidence that the current system is not getting the job done for too many students. As you revisit ESEA, I urge you to make lasting and significant change that—if done right—will transform student lives and advance the future of our Nation.

Thank you again for inviting me to testify. I am happy to answer your questions.

Good afternoon Chairman Harkin, Senator Enzi, and members of the committee.

Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (“ESEA”) and New York City’s approach to school turnarounds. We hope that our experience can serve as a model for other districts nationwide as they take up President Obama’s challenge to turnaround the bottom 5 percent of America’s schools.

Fifteen years ago, the iconic teacher’s union leader, Al Shanker, made a point about public schools that we are still working to realize today.

“The key is that unless there is accountability, we will never get the right system,” he said. “As long as there are no consequences if kids or adults don’t perform, as long as the discussion is not about education and student outcomes, then we’re playing a game as to who has the power.”

No Child Left Behind (“NCLB”) brought long-overdue accountability to public education and cast a spotlight on a shameful achievement gap that had gone unaddressed for generations. The law rightfully demanded that all children, regardless of their background, have access to a high-quality education that allows them to achieve their full potential. You and your colleagues deserve praise for bringing these difficult but essential reforms to the education landscape.

That said, there is widespread consensus that NCLB can be improved. Its focus on absolute achievement instead of growth put many schools in the category of “failing” even if students made significant gains. Moreover, it takes years before interventions are first mandated in struggling schools, and even longer before more dramatic restructuring efforts are required for chronically low-performing schools. Even after 6 years of missing Annual Yearly Progress—years during which students lives and futures are on the line—NCLB is vague about what types of turnaround strategies are necessary to achieve fundamental change. This has allowed schools and districts to implement so-called restructuring initiatives that amount to mere tinkering around the edges while students are falling through the cracks.

The Department of Education’s Blueprint for changes in ESEA addresses some of these shortcomings and is a step in the right direction. Their proposed changes would require schools to show that they are responsible for helping all students make progress rather than holding every single school to uniform expectations regardless of student achievement levels upon enrollment.

In New York City, we have focused on this type of accountability model, measuring schools not just on where they stand, but on how much ground their students gain from year-to-year. This system recognizes schools making great progress even while serving challenging student populations and it enables us to provide supports when schools are failing to meet student needs. Perhaps most importantly, it allows us to quickly identify schools where persistent patterns of low performance necessitate more significant interventions, including—in some cases—making the difficult decision to replace failing schools with better options for our students and their families.

When Mayor Bloomberg and I assumed responsibility for our school system, we made a commitment to ensuring that all of our children have access to excellent schools, schools that help them graduate prepared for success in college and careers. While much work remains, our efforts—along with the hard work of our teachers, administrators, parents, and students—are paying off.

In our elementary and middle schools, the percentage of city students meeting or exceeding grade-level standards on annual State Math and English Language Arts exams has risen dramatically since 2002—from 38 percent to 69 percent in English and from 41 percent to 82 percent in math. In fact, New York City’s five boroughs made more progress than any other county statewide from 2002 to 2009—that’s measured against other students taking the exact same tests.

These gains are mirrored at the high school level. Just last month, New York State education officials announced that the city’s progress in improving graduation rates had continued unabated, with our 4-year graduation rate reaching a historic high of 63 percent in 2009 with gains across every demographic group. We recognize that we still have a long way to go, but after a decade of stagnation, we are proud that the city’s graduation rate has increased for 8 consecutive years. Since 2005 alone, the graduation rate has risen by 12.5 points. The dropout rate has been cut nearly in half since 2005, falling to a historic low of 11.8 percent. This is true even though New York State is increasing graduation requirements.

So how did this happen?

Much of this progress reflects the efforts of diligent and talented educators who share our belief that the status quo is not good enough and who know that if they set goals and stick to their plans, they can change lives. It also demonstrates the commitment of students and families, who know that when it comes to education, hard work brings great rewards.

Some of the progress also reflects structural reform and a significant investment in initiatives designed to turn around failing schools. When the Department sees that a school is not providing students with the education they need, we quickly intervene to try to change those conditions, and our efforts have been effective in improving outcomes at many city schools.

Take, for example, Hillcrest High School in Queens. Hillcrest is a large school, enrolling over 3,000 students. In September 2006, we transformed Hillcrest into seven small learning communities or SLCs. Each of the SLCs is organized around a theme that engages student interests, and each enrolls approximately 450 students. A core group of teachers and staff work closely and consistently with those students, allowing them to develop academic and social supports tailored to meet individual student needs.

This initiative already appears to be making a difference at Hillcrest. In June 2007, the school's graduation rate was 62 percent. By 2009, it had climbed to 68 percent. While there is obviously still much room for improvement, Hillcrest presents an excellent example of a restructuring program that has put a low-performing school on the path toward success.

Another key strategy that can jump-start school improvement is appointing a highly trained new principal. While some of our schools have experienced remarkable gains under a new principal, others only experienced incremental improvements insufficient to yield a dramatic turnaround.

Small learning communities and leadership changes are among the more significant interventions the Department introduces to transform outcomes at our lower-performing schools. We also provide extensive professional development for teachers and administrators and introduce enrichment programs or mentoring and tutoring services in struggling schools. Where appropriate, we help schools to phase down total enrollment or reconfigure grades and classes. Low-performing teachers are given evaluations and support in an effort to boost their effectiveness. Teams of teachers across the city have been organized to improve outcomes among targeted groups of students.

Yet at some schools, despite these efforts, the outcomes have not changed. In some cases, conditions have even deteriorated. As a city, and as a country, we must then ask ourselves: When should we stop sending children to a place unlikely to prepare them for life beyond high school? When is it simply immoral to consign students to the prospect of failure by sending them to schools where we would never send our own children?

When our efforts are not turning around failing schools and we know we are capable of doing better by our kids, we must be prepared to take more radical steps, even when those efforts prove controversial.

In issuing the Blueprint for revising ESEA, President Obama and the U.S. Department of Education have called upon State and local education officials to "turn around" the bottom 5 percent of schools nationwide. They recognize that turning failing schools around is difficult and often controversial work, and they have therefore outlined four permissible strategies designed to support schools in achieving that goal. They are:

1. Turnaround Model—Redesign or replace a school, including replacing the principal and at least half of the staff.
2. Restart Model—Convert a district public school to a public charter school.
3. Transformation Model—This is similar to the Turnaround Model, but requires rigorous evaluation of teachers and the principal, rewarding those who increase student achievement and removing those who fail to achieve that goal.
4. School Closure—Immediately close the school and re-enroll current students in other, more successful district schools.

As mentioned, New York City has a solid track record of improving achievement through a combination of rigorous accountability, structural reform, customized supports to schools and students, and leadership change. When those efforts are not good enough, however, we have implemented an approach to closing and replacing schools that the Department of Education would classify as the "turnaround model."

Our approach to closing schools differs from that used in many other parts of the country. We don't padlock the school doors immediately or transfer current students elsewhere in the district. Instead, we phase schools out gradually, without adding new incoming classes, until the final group of students graduate. Simultaneously, we gradually introduce replacement schools into the building, typically adding one class per year until they reach full enrollment. These replacement schools have new principals, and while they are required to interview 50 percent of highly qualified staff from the pre-existing school, they can also bring in new teachers matched to

the new school's mission and theme. Unlike similar efforts in many other parts of the country, this turnaround strategy has a solid track record of success.

Since 2002, New York City has announced the phase out of 91 schools. We have replaced these schools with more than 400 new schools that are outperforming other schools citywide. Our new high schools, for example, have an average graduation rate of 75 percent even though they serve some of the city's highest-need students. In fact, MDRC—one of the Nation's most-respected education policy research institutions—recently reported that students enrolled in our new schools tend to be more disadvantaged than their peers in other schools citywide across a number of socioeconomic and academic indicators.

I want to be clear that we do not arrive at the decision to phase out a school without careful consideration. We have a comprehensive process for identifying our lowest performing schools and then determining which turnaround strategies will be used in them. There is simply no excuse for keeping a school open when it is not giving students the education they need and when our best efforts have failed to change those conditions.

Our accountability system ensures that all schools are held to clear and fair standards. Every city school receives an annual Progress Report grade, which is shared with the school community and the broader public. These grades range from an "A" to "F" and take into consideration student performance, student progress, and school environment. Each school is compared against all schools serving the same grades, and also against a "peer group" of the 40 most similar schools citywide. Schools can earn extra credit for exemplary progress among high-need students.

Any school that earns a "D" or "F" grade on its most recent progress report, or that earns a "C" grade for 3 consecutive years, is automatically considered as a candidate for restructuring, leadership change, or possible closure.

That is not the only criteria we look at, and we also contemplate significant interventions at a handful of other schools based on a broader set of considerations.

Another important factor we consider is a school's performance on its annual Quality Review. These on-site evaluations of a school's culture and teaching practices help us assess the school's capacity to turn around. In evaluating Quality Reviews, we look closely at a school's strengths and weaknesses to see how they might impact its capacity to achieve a dramatic turnaround. When we have concerns about a school based on its Quality Review, we initiate additional conversations with the Superintendents and other Department staffers that have first-hand experience working with the school to determine whether it has the capacity to show significant improvement in the near future.

Finally, we weigh community indicators at each school. This includes annual school survey results from parents, students, and teachers. It also includes demand for seats to assess whether or not families feel that the school is a good option for their children. When schools are not working, students and parents vote with their feet, and most of the schools we have decided to phase out have experienced low and declining demand.

We remain steadfastly focused on helping phase-out schools to improve during their final years of operation, and we provide intensive support to the students enrolled in those schools. Indeed, our experience shows that outcomes for students in phase out schools tend to get better as those schools move toward closure. Any students that are still working to earn their diplomas when a school closes receive guidance and the opportunity to transfer to another school or program that better meets their needs.

Many faculty and staff members continue working in our phase-out schools for several years as those schools move toward closure. As I mentioned earlier, our new schools are also required to hire 50 percent of highly qualified faculty from schools they replace, and any teachers who do not seek or obtain positions in the replacement schools can apply for other vacancies citywide. Our new schools have new leaders, many new teachers, and distinctive themes—all of which allow them to build the new school cultures that are a precondition for truly turning around a failing school.

We believe that our approach to school turnaround is effective because our new small schools allow teachers, school leaders, and other staff to get to know every student very well, ensuring that academic and social supports are in place to meet individual student needs. The smaller size of the staff also makes it easier for educators to collaborate and plan collectively to design a coherent curriculum. School leaders are better able to plan schoolwide professional development so that students make continuous progress. All of these characteristics are found in high-quality, large- and medium-sized schools as well, but we believe that the personal attention afforded by a much smaller school makes a particularly powerful difference for our

highest-need students. That belief is borne out in the results that these small schools have achieved to date.

I want to take a moment to provide a concrete example illustrating what this approach can mean for students and communities.

In September 2003, we initiated the phase out of Bushwick High School in Brooklyn. That school had a longstanding history of academic struggles. The 4-year graduation rate for the Class of 2002 was 23 percent. Today, there are four small schools thriving on the campus. Collectively, they enroll a very high-need student population—roughly 14 percent of Bushwick students are English language learners and 17 percent are special education students, and most students come from low-income families. The overwhelming majority of incoming ninth-graders are performing well-below grade level upon enrollment. Nonetheless, the average 4-year graduation rate for the three schools we opened in September 2003 is 72 percent.

There are many examples of large, successful high schools in the city, and those schools are a valued part of our diverse system of 1,600 schools. But we also know that some of our schools—large and small alike—have been underperforming for years. We have high schools, for example, that have sustained graduation rates at or below 50 percent for a decade or longer. We cannot stand by and watch such schools fail another generation of students when a host of interventions and supports have not yielded meaningful improvements, especially when we have similar schools serving similar students that are achieving significantly better results.

There is always anxiety associated with change of this scale. But sometimes, when a school has experienced sustained failure, the only way to transform those conditions is through fundamental change—change that offers increased support for current students and better learning environments for future ones.

For this reason, I believe ESEA needs to be explicit about what should happen to persistently failing schools. While Race to the Top gives States incentives to close schools after all other school improvement strategies have failed, the Blueprint is more ambiguous about this issue. Our experience in New York shows that replacing failing schools can transform entire districts, so it is essential that the legislation does not permit States to shy away from making tough choices when necessary. As you revisit ESEA, I urge you not to waste this historic opportunity to make lasting change that—if done right—will enrich students' lives and advance the future of our Nation.

At the outset of my testimony, I noted that graduation rates have risen steadily in New York City over the last 6 years, and I asked how this had been achieved. Much of the work, I explained, has to do with the determination of educators, parents, and students.

The other reason it has happened is that our city has been honest with itself in cases where those efforts were not good enough. There are many stories like Hillcrest High School, where planning and support changed outcomes. And there are others like Bushwick where more radical steps were required to turnaround a school that had failed its students for years. When we talk about a school with a graduation rate at or below 50 percent, that means that every year we take a “wait and see approach,” half of its students are falling through the cracks.

Unlike many other districts across the country, the Mayor and I have been willing to make tough choices and take on powerful interest groups to ensure that our students have access to the excellent schools they need and deserve. While much work remains, we have achieved progress, and learned important lessons along the way that can guide nationwide school turnaround efforts.

First and foremost, you must establish clear and fair accountability systems that account for where students are when they first enter a school and how they progress along the way. We support the introduction of a growth model as proposed in the Blueprint, and we also support a continued focus on boosting achievement among the highest-need students.

Secondly, you must demand that States are honest in identifying schools that are persistently failing students. Some low-performing schools will benefit from restructuring interventions, leadership change, or other support such as intensive professional development. When those interventions are insufficient to reverse chronic underperformance, you must be fearless in establishing explicit restructuring strategies that prevent States and districts from evading the tough choices necessary to give all students the education they deserve. We believe our approach of gradually phasing out failing schools maximizes stability for current students while creating better options for their younger peers. New schools also grow gradually, allowing them to build a culture of high expectations for students and a community that supports student success.

Real education reform cannot occur without your leadership and support. Powerful interest groups continually advocate in favor of the status quo, despite abundant

evidence that the public education system is not getting the job done for far too many of our students. We are therefore counting on you to strengthen ESEA, so that all of our students have access to the high-quality education they need and deserve.

Thank you again for inviting me to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions you have.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Klein. I will note right now that twice you mentioned, at least in summarizing and in your statement, you took the bigger schools and made them into smaller schools. I want to come back to that at the end of this panel.

Ms. Donohue, welcome. Please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF BEVERLY DONOHUE, VICE PRESIDENT OF  
POLICY AND RESEARCH, NEW VISIONS FOR PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS, NEW YORK, NY**

Ms. DONOHUE. Chairman Harkin, Senator Enzi, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you.

At New Visions for Public Schools, we have focused on school reform work in New York City for the last 20 years. For the last 10 of those years, we have been closely engaged in turnaround work of a variety of different kinds that I will go into in a little bit of detail. Most of our work has been at the high school level, and I will focus on that in my remarks as well.

Our experience has led us to think in terms of a continuum of school transformation possibilities with different levers for change viable at schools with different levels of student performance and different levels of human capacity.

For the persistently lowest performing high schools in New York, the only approach to turnaround that has been successful is, as the Chancellor described, school closure through phase-out over time. This approach was pioneered in the Chancellor's district in the late 1990s and has been continued under mayoral control since then.

New Visions in about 2002 to 2003 tried to reform two large failing high schools without closing them down and restructuring them and found that that turnaround effort ended in failure. I think it is important to note that the history of turnaround efforts nationally has a lot of failures and they are to be learned from. What happened in this instance was that without a strong group of leaders and teachers within the school, they were unable to create a viable plan for turnaround and they were defunded as a result.

A few years later than that, about 2005, we undertook again a turnaround effort with large schools that were in a little bit better shape. They had graduation rates between 50 percent and 60 percent, strong principals, and a number of very committed teachers to the turnaround model. We divided those schools into small learning communities, New Dorp in Staten Island and Hillcrest in Queens, and since that point in time, they have been immensely successful.

We credit the turnaround in these two schools to not the division into small learning communities, but to an implementation of an inquiry team model called the scaffolded apprenticeship model, which was for building teacher capacity and new school leaders. In this model, teams of educators work together to identify a small group of struggling students who become the focus of ongoing ac-

tion research aimed at addressing specific skill gaps and moving these students into the school's sphere of success. Through this work, teachers iteratively change their classroom practice to make it more effective and share the results. Our experience here confirmed our sense that reform that is structural only and that stops at the classroom door has no continued impact on student performance. The two schools I mentioned here have now about 60 inquiry teams between them of teachers who are doing this work and moving the school forward.

This model has been extended throughout other schools in New York and is currently being piloted in Boston and in Oakland as well.

Low-performing schools need to focus their efforts on a few critical problems at any one time in order to make headway. Schools with higher capacity or startup schools without a culture that has the friction against the status quo can take advantage of broader based reform models. The 99 small schools that New Visions helped create through the New Century High School initiative that replaced large, failing schools, as the Chancellor's testimony outlined, inform our conclusion here. The New Century High Schools were required to adhere to 10 principles of effective schools that were built into their initial design. The design was carried out in a competitive nature by school teams vying for limited numbers of school approvals, and it became a rigorous process that was a learning experience for those who participated in it and it helped build capacity across New York City for folks interested in new school creation.

Each New Century High School signed on for a target of 80 percent graduation rate and 92 percent average daily attendance. That target, we believe, helped to focus the team on student data and gave an urgency to the work that they were doing.

Each school received support from a variety of the partners in the New Century initiative, which included unions, the Department of Education in New York, and the various funders who supported the initiative. Parents and community groups were involved in the planning, and each school had one community-based partner at a minimum to provide their own unique experience and opportunities for young people.

New Century is a young initiative. Its first schools opened in 2002, and evaluations of it are still forthcoming. So we have no long-term view on how successful these schools will be, but the 99 schools we were involved with had a 10 percent higher graduation rate as of last spring than other schools on average in New York City.

With the limited body of research on effective strategies for low-performing schools, particularly at the high school level, I would urge the committee to support an approach fostering continued local innovation and close evaluation of turnaround programs. Assessing school capacity to implement change is critical to guide the choice of an effective strategy. And finally, focusing exclusively on the school level neglects the important role that networks, community organizations, and other external supports play in creating and sustaining the preconditions for success.

In New York, the department, through its Office of Small Schools, was immensely supportive of this work. In addition, the great wealth of nonprofit organizations that exist in New York City lent their expertise, their social capital, and their knowledge of communities throughout the city.

So I thank you for this opportunity to testify.  
[The prepared statement of Ms. Donohue follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BEVERLY DONOHUE

SUMMARY

Chairman Harkin, Senator Enzi and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. My name is Beverly Donohue and I am vice president for Policy and Research at New Visions for Public Schools, a non-profit organization that has focused on school reform in New York City for the last 20 years. For the last 10 years, we have been closely engaged in school turnaround work, almost entirely at the high school level, focusing on schools in the highest poverty neighborhoods in NYC. Our experience has led us to think in terms of a continuum of school transformation, with different levers for change viable for schools at different levels of student performance.

For the persistently lowest-performing high schools, the only approach to turnaround that has been successful in NYC is school closure. The Chancellor's District of the late 1990's used closure and replacement with small schools as its only strategy for failing high schools. New Visions' effort in 2002-2003 to reform three large failing high schools with existing school leaders and staff ended in failure. However, struggling high schools at somewhat higher levels of performance with a strong leader and a cadre of committed teachers, can, with support, dramatically accelerate student performance. New Visions has worked with two such large high schools since 2005, helping the two principals and their staffs restructure into small learning communities. We believe that the marked improvement of these two schools depended more on their implementing strategies that directly impacted what teachers do in the classroom than on the underlying restructuring into multiple academies. The strategy they used was an inquiry team model called "SAM" to build teacher capacity and certify new school leaders.<sup>1</sup> In this model, teams of educators work together to identify a small group of struggling students who become the focus of ongoing action research aimed at addressing specific skill gaps and moving these students into the school's "sphere of success." Through this work, teachers iteratively change their classroom practice to make it more effective and share the results. These two schools currently have about 60 inquiry teams of teachers doing this work.

In our experience, low-performing schools need to focus their efforts on a few critical problems at any one time to make headway. Schools with higher capacity or start-up schools without the friction of a status quo culture can take advantage of broader-based reform models. The 99 small high schools created through the New Century High School Initiative<sup>2</sup> inform this conclusion. The New Century High Schools were required to adhere to 10 principles of effective schools that were built into their initial design.<sup>3</sup> Each New Century High School signed on for a target of an 80 percent graduation rate and 92 percent average daily attendance, received support from all New Century Initiative partners, included parents in the planning phase, and partnered with at least one community-based not-for-profit organization.

With a limited body of research on effective strategies for low-performing schools, particularly high schools, I would urge the committee to support an approach that fosters continued local innovation and close evaluation of turnaround programs. As-

<sup>1</sup>New Visions partnered with Baruch College's School of Public Affairs to create the Scaffolded Apprenticeship Model (SAM), a capacity building program to develop distributed leadership in schools and develop a culture of continuous improvement through the sharing of results by multiple inquiry teams.

<sup>2</sup>New Century is a partnership of New Visions with the NYC Department of Education, the United Federation of Teachers and the NYC Council of Supervisors and Administrators. The initiative was supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation and the Open Society Institute. The 2009 New Century High School average graduation rate was 72.6 percent, as compared to New York's city-wide graduation rate of 62.7 percent.

<sup>3</sup>The 10 principles are: Clear Focus and High Expectations; Rigorous Instruction; Personalized Learning Environment; Instructional Leadership; School-based Professional Development; Meaningful Assessment; Partnerships; Parent/Caregiver Engagement; Student Voice and Participation; and Integration of Technology.

sessing school capacity to implement change is critical to guide the choice of an effective strategy. Finally, focusing exclusively on the school level neglects the important role that networks, community organizations and other external supports play in creating and sustaining the preconditions for success.

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Chairman Harkin, Senator Enzi and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. I applaud your purpose today of addressing the critical issue of failing schools in our Nation.

My name is Beverly Donohue and I am Vice President for Policy and Research at New Visions for Public Schools, a non-profit organization that has focused on school reform in New York City for the last 20 years. Under contract to the New York City Department of Education, New Visions currently serves as a Partner Service Organization accountable for improving student performance for 35,000 students in 76 schools.

For the last 10 years we have been closely engaged in school turnaround work, almost entirely at the high school level, focusing on schools in the highest poverty neighborhoods in NYC. During that time we have created 99 new small high schools, tried and failed to turnaround three large, low-performing high schools, and successfully guided two large high schools with mid-level performance to restructure into small learning communities. These experiences have led us to think in terms of a continuum of school transformation, with different levers for change viable for schools at different levels of student performance.

For the persistently lowest performing high schools, the only approach to turnaround that has been successful in NYC is school closure, implemented gradually over a 4-year phase-out period. The pioneering experiment in school turnaround was the Chancellor's district, which operated from 1996 until 2003, when it was folded into the broad-based reforms implemented by Chancellor Klein with the advent of Mayoral Control. While elementary and middle schools in the Chancellor's District showed improvement after implementing a "tight" model of reforms,<sup>4</sup> all five large high schools brought into the program were shut down with campuses of new small schools created in their place.

New Visions, with the support of the NYC Department of Education, undertook turnaround efforts in three large failing high schools from 2002 to 2003. School-level teams spent months developing turnaround plans using promising, research-based models. Despite heavy facilitation by New Visions and other partners, these plans were judged inadequate to produce significant improvement in student outcomes; the initiative was then terminated. Without changes in leadership, staff, and context, the preconditions for turnaround did not exist. These three attempts shared a "one-off" quality. There was no network or district structure to protect a clear focus on change against the daily distractions that derail progress. The embedded culture of these schools appeared too likely to reject the transplant of even the most promising school reform model.

High schools at mid-levels of performance have other options for improvement. In a New York context, this group included schools with 4-year graduation rates between about 55 percent and 65 percent in the mid-2000s. New Visions supported two such large high schools in transforming themselves into small learning communities.<sup>5</sup> Each school started its improvement effort with a strong leader and a cadre of dedicated staff willing to take risks and participate in the hard work of change; each school has shown sustained, significant improvement in student outcomes.

By the time we began working with these two schools in 2005, our experience had led us to this conclusion: *without changing what classroom teachers do, modifying structure or curriculum does little to improve student outcomes.* As a way to avoid "change that stops at the classroom door," New Visions co-developed an inquiry team model called "SAM" to build teacher capacity and certify new school leaders.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Phenix, Deinya; Siegel, Dorothy; Zaltsman, Ariel; Fruchter, Norm, *Virtual District, Real Improvement*; Institute for Education and Social Policy, New York University.

<sup>5</sup>Both New Dorp High School in Staten Island and Hillcrest High School in Queens restructured starting in 2005 while remaining under the leadership of a single principal. Both schools have since seen significant increases in both attendance and graduation rates. On their annual NYC Progress Reports, the schools have moved over 3 years from a "C" grade to an "A" and a high "B" respectively.

<sup>6</sup>New Visions partnered with Baruch College's School of Public Affairs to create the Scaffolded Apprenticeship Model (SAM), a capacity building program to create distributed leadership in schools and develop a culture of continuous improvement through the sharing of results by multiple inquiry teams. One version of this 18-month program provides a principal's certification upon successful completion and has certified 115 educators as principals to date. Over a dozen

In this model, teams of educators work together to identify a small group of struggling students who become the focus of on-going action research aimed at addressing specific skill gaps, accelerating the pace of learning, and moving these students into the school's "sphere of success." Through this work, teachers iteratively change their classroom practice to make it more effective and share the results. There are now about 60 inquiry teams functioning in the small learning communities of Hillcrest and New Dorp High Schools, meeting to review student data and drive improved teaching and learning. This model has now been spread throughout New York City, is being piloted in Boston and Oakland, and has become the core professional development strategy in New Visions schools. In every program and every interaction we have with schools, we base our work on the fundamental questions of SAM's cycle of inquiry: What do we know about what our students can and cannot do? And, what are we going to do about it?

In our experience, low-performing schools need to focus their efforts on a few critical problems at any one time to make headway. Schools with higher capacity or start-up schools without the friction of a status quo culture can take advantage of broader-based reform models. The small high schools created through the New Century High School Initiative<sup>7</sup> inform this conclusion. The New Visions' New Century schools and similar schools developed by other non-profit organizations played an essential role in New York City's high school reform work; they created the replacement seats needed to implement a broad "school closure" strategy. The New Century High Schools were required to adhere to 10 principles of effective schools that were built into their initial design.<sup>8</sup> These principles comprised a "loose" model that resulted in huge variation across the first 89 schools. More recently, "tighter" school models for former drop-out students and for career and technical education schools have also resulted in schools that are unique and varied. Research-based models have provided the first draft; local adaptation and innovation have sustained the continuous learning necessary to a high performing school.

I would also point to several other features that have contributed to the strength of the New Century results. First, each New Century High School signed on for a target of "80/92"—an 80 percent graduation rate and 92 percent average daily attendance. That commitment created urgency and a focus on individual student data. Accountability to a specific goal has proved to be a powerful driver of improvement. Second, all New Century High Schools were approved for opening by the unanimous consent of a "Core Group" comprised of New Visions, the Department of Education, the United Federation of Teachers, the Principals' Union and the foundation funders. All these stakeholders were committed to solve problems at the local level. Parents and students, along with educators, helped to plan each school in a competition for a limited number of grants. Many planning groups failed to meet the high standards required to open a school. The broad base of support and emphasis on quality, along with an extensive community outreach strategy, helped to defuse tensions as neighborhoods watched historic high schools begin to shut their doors. Third, all New Century High Schools were formed with non-profit partner organizations at the planning table. The strongest partnerships continue to contribute engaging classroom and out-of-school experiences, such as internships, to provide students with workplace skills and to connect them to their communities. Community Partnerships in many of these schools have expanded the toolkit of strategies to make students career and college ready.<sup>9</sup> There are several completed evaluation studies of the New Century High School Initiative available on the New Visions Web site ([www.newvisions.org](http://www.newvisions.org)) and others will be forthcoming in the near future. As these relatively young schools mature, we will continue to learn from their experience and challenges.

There is a limited body of research on what approaches are effective in turning around low-performing schools, particularly at the high school level. I would urge the committee to support an approach to reauthorization that fosters continued local

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of these graduates have stepped into principal or assistant principal roles within their own schools.

<sup>7</sup>New Century is a partnership of New Visions with the NYC Department of Education, the United Federation of Teachers and the NYC Council of Supervisors and Administrators. The initiative was supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation and the Open Society Institute. The 2009 New Century High School average graduation rate was 72.6 percent, as compared to New York's city-wide graduation rate of 62.7 percent.

<sup>8</sup>The 10 principles are: Clear focus and High Expectations; Rigorous Instruction; Personalized Learning Environment; Instructional Leadership; School-based professional development; Meaningful Assessment; Partnerships; Parent/Caregiver Engagement; Student Voice and Participation; and Integration of Technology.

<sup>9</sup>Reforming High Schools, Lessons from the New Century High Schools Initiative, 2001–2006, New Visions for Public Schools, <http://www.newvisions.org/node/313/10/1/49>.

innovation and close evaluation of turnaround programs to deepen existing knowledge. Many districts and States have initiated turnaround programs and policies that could experience setbacks from too rigid an application of a set of models. Assessing school capacity to implement change is critical to guide the choice of an effective strategy. Finally, focusing exclusively on what must be done at the school level risks neglecting the important role that networks, community organizations and other external supports play in creating and sustaining the preconditions for success.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ms. Donohue. Now we turn to Dr. Balfanz. Dr. Balfanz, welcome.

**STATEMENT OF ROBERT BALFANZ, Ph.D., ASSOCIATE RESEARCH SCIENTIST, CENTER FOR SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS AND ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF THE TALENT DEVELOPMENT MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT, BALTIMORE, MD**

Mr. BALFANZ. Chairman Harkin, Senator Enzi, members of the HELP Committee, thank you for inviting me here to testify today on this vital national challenge of turning around our low-performing secondary schools. I am going to focus today on middle and high schools.

In the 21st century, we have to provide all of our students pathways from secondary school to post-secondary success in college, the military, or through job training. The reason for this is simple. There is no work to support a family if you do not graduate high school and have the ability to receive further training. We cannot have a society in which whole communities are essentially cut off from the 21st century because they do not have the opportunity to attend schoolings to prepare them for this success.

The reason we find ourselves in this troubling situation is that far too many of our middle and high schools that serve high-poverty populations, if we are honest about it, are designed and operated to fail. As Chairman Harkin has pointed out, there are 2,000 high schools where graduation is not the norm when it needs to be a necessity. These high schools are found in every State in rural and urban areas. They educate primarily low-income and minority students, and as such, they produce half the Nation's dropouts and are essentially the engines of the underclass.

Each of these high schools, in turn, are typically supported or fed by one or two middle schools where as many as half or more of the students who drop out become disengaged from schooling. It is in the middle grades that students make the independent decision, is schooling for me? Will I put the work forward that is necessary to succeed or is it something simply to be endured? And when we lose these students in middle school, they stop attending regularly, they get in trouble, they fail their courses, and by the time they get to high school, they have half a foot out the door.

This creates a level of educational challenge that we do not fully comprehend, and let me just paint this picture a little based on the 15 years of experience working in and with these schools.

In a high-challenge high school—and this is an urban school. I can give a rural example later, but in an urban school, you might have 1,200 students and you might have 400 or 500 of them in the ninth grade. Of those 400 or 500, 100 or 200 are repeating ninth grade for the second or third time because they did not succeed the

first time, and they are now, many of them, at the age at which they can drop out. Of the students that enter, only about a quarter are within grade level, not even on grade level, but close. Fifty percent are reading or doing math at the fifth to seventh grade level, and a quarter have skills below the fifth grade level. Maybe a third of these kids missed a month or more of schooling in eighth grade. They already have a habit of missing lots of school. Fifteen to twenty percent might be in special education. The whole population lives in poverty.

So do we meet this high educational challenge with the equivalent of the Marine Corps, the best trained, the best equipped, the most motivated teachers and administrators? No. Often this is training ground for the young and the inexperienced. Principals turn over almost every year, teachers every 5 years. So we have the highest need and offer them the weakest answer. And if we are honest, that is a recipe for failure.

It does not have to be this way. We have had many examples in the past decade of middle and high schools that only educate high-need students that have succeeded. Let me just give you a couple of examples from our work.

Our Baltimore Talent Development High School that you heard about is located in west Baltimore. In spite of the open-air drug markets shown on the HBO show, *The Wire*, all our students enter, like we said, multiple years below grade level, some with declining attendance, and yet we manage to graduate over 80 percent and every one of them have some sort of post-secondary placement, be it job training, college, or the military.

Most recently we put together a new model called Diplomas Now, which combines our whole school reform efforts with national service corps members, in this case from City Year, which lets us put a team of 10 to 15 idealistic 18- to 24-year-olds in the building. Each one has basically a group of 15 to 20 students to shepherd who have early warning indicators of being off track of having that low attendance in middle grades, of having failed in the middle grades. They sort of quietly ask every day, are you in school? If not, I will call you. Did you get your homework done? If not, let us meet at lunch. You're giving Chairman Harkin a hard time. Now, I know he could be tough sometimes, but sarcasm does not work. That sort of continually nagging and nurturing is often needed by hundreds of students at a time to stay on track. Teachers cannot do that alone. They may be able to support a handful of kids. They cannot do hundreds.

And finally, we add on communities and schools case-managed social workers because there is also a subset of kids, the highest-need kids, where the effects of poverty are so strong, until you have an answer, you cannot educate them. If a student who is being raised by his grandma is staying home to give her an insulin shot because they trust no one else, until we solve that, no haranguing is going to get that kid into school.

So the schools need all these tools together, the whole-school reforms, the person power to reach every kid that needs nagging and nurturing, and solving the toughest cases of poverty.

The real answer to all this is the teacher team. If you ask me, what's the answer, it is not structural change, which can be impor-

tant. It is not getting high-quality teachers, which can be important. It is that team of four teachers working with 75 kids so they can know them well, they can know their stories, who are then supported by good instructional materials, by a second shift of adults who can help them get the kids motivated in school, by early warning indicator data, by a leadership team which supports them. That should be the fundamental unit we build everything up from.

To bring this to scale and how the Elementary and Secondary Education Act can help, we need to think about two things. First of all, it is not just simply who, but how. So, yes, I have seen close-and-replace work well. I have seen it work poorly. I have seen charter school operators take schools that were essentially a national disgrace and make a success story. I have seen charter schools that should be closed down. I have seen schools that knowledgeable people have said has no hope of recreating itself.

So it is possible through all these different ways of who to succeed or not. What really matters is the how, the strategy to use to turn the school around. Here we just have to keep, I think, three key points in mind.

First, as we heard before, you really need an accurate diagnosis of what the educational challenge is because too often we say, "hey, I know the answer." It is a failed school. So nothing must have worked. Anything new is better. That guarantees big change. It does not guarantee big improvement. So we really have to say, what is your educational challenge? Do you have 20 kids 2 years below level or 200? Those are two different challenges. Do you have 100 kids that missed a month or more of middle school or no kids? Those are different stories. Do you have many kids impacted by poverty or only a handful? Each of those would be a different strategy that you need to figure out.

Once you have your design to meet your challenge, then the question is, do I have the know-how to put it in place? Do I actually have a good strategy for students that are 3 years behind grade level in reading in ninth grade? Does my strategy have evidence of effect? Does it reach those 200 kids? Do I have the capacity to implement it? Do I have people trained? Do they have the time to do it? Do they have the support?

Third, do we have the will? Right? Do we really believe if we work harder this will work or are we just sort of trying to get through a tough situation?

And finally, are we protected from turbulence—right—that we do not get started 1 day and a new district policy the next day or new Federal policy the third day and we have to stop?

So once we put all these things together, we have a design that meets the challenge. We have the know-how, the will, the capacity, and the protection from turbulence, now we have a recipe for success.

In closing, I would just want to say that the HELP Committee is literally at the forefront of secondary school improvement and that many of the things that need to help us out are in the legislation that members have proposed, from Chairman Harkin's Every Student Counts Graduation Rate Act to Senator Bingaman's Graduation for All, Senator Reed's Success in the Middle, the Keeping PACE Act, Senator Franken's principal effectiveness bill. Much of

the answer is in there. It just needs to be brought together in a comprehensive whole.

I look forward to working with you to make sure that we can find a solution to fundamentally improve the Nation for the better.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Balfanz follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT BALFANZ, PH.D.

SUMMARY

We find ourselves in a troublesome situation: Too many of our low-income and minority students are concentrated in middle and high schools that are designed and operated to fail. In 2,000 of our Nation's high schools, which produce half of the country's dropouts, graduation is often a 50/50 proposition.

It does not have to be this way. It cannot be this way. We cannot have a country in which entire communities are cut off from the only real avenue to prosperity—a good education. Over the past decade we have amassed enough proof points to show that turnaround is possible.

For instance, in three high schools in the Recovery District of New Orleans, an innovative turnaround model, Diplomas Now, is having dramatic effects on the attendance, behavior and achievement of students. This collaboration of Talent Development, City Year and Communities in Schools both transforms the whole school and, using an early warning and intervention system, matches the individual needs of students with targeted interventions.

Similarly, in our own Baltimore Talent Development High School in one of the city's most impoverished neighborhoods, the graduation rate is more than 80 percent and each graduate has a placement for continued education and training, despite the fact that most students enter with skills 2 or more years below grade level.

So it is possible to draw essential lessons from our own work and the larger body of research on school turnaround and improvement.

**First**, it is not simply about how the school is governed and operated or who it employs.

**Second**, there are at least a dozen things one needs to get right to successfully turn around a school. This is why turnaround is difficult and our success rate low. What we need to do is make school turnaround a professional effort grounded in analysis and knowledge—one in which evidence-based reforms are matched to the challenges faced.

With a thorough understanding of the educational challenge—academic, engagement and poverty challenges combined—a school faces and its current capabilities, it is then possible to create an educational design that can turn the school around. For the design to work, however, it must be implemented with the needed know-how, capacity, and will, as well as protected from turbulence in policy and practice. It is in these areas that ESEA Reauthorization can help. Members of the Senate HELP committee have been at the forefront of secondary school improvement. Much of what is needed in ESEA Reauthorization to enable successful secondary school turnaround exists in the legislation members of the committee have advanced. The bottom line is that the time is now to make reforming the Nation's low-performing secondary schools a vital national mission. A Federal-State-local partnership designed to accomplish this, guided and supported by ESEA reauthorization, can fundamentally make this a better Nation.

Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Enzi, and members of the HELP committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today.

In the 21st century all students need to be provided a pathway from secondary school to post-secondary success, via college, job training, or the military. To put it simply, there is no work that can support a family for students who fail to graduate from high school or do so unprepared for further learning. Yet for far too many of our students, in particular low-income and minority students, such pathways do not exist. In an era dominated by human capital this not only weakens our Nation's competitiveness, but also, as both the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and U.S. Army have noted, threatens its social fabric. We cannot have a country in which entire communities are cut off from the only real avenue to prosperity—a good education.

We find ourselves in this troublesome situation, in good part, because too many of our low-income and minority students are concentrated in middle and high schools that are designed and operated to fail. In 2,000 of our Nation's high schools, graduation is not the norm, in an era when it is a necessity. These schools, which

can be found in every State, in both urban and rural areas, are almost exclusively attended by low-income and minority students. As such, they are the Nation's dropout factories and engines of the underclass.

Each of these high schools, in turn, is linked with one or more middle schools, where at least half of eventual dropouts begin the process of disengaging from school, and achievement gaps become achievement chasms. Thus, by the time they get to high school, many students already have one foot out the door, as witnessed by their declining attendance, poor behavior, and course failure during the middle grades. As a result, high schools face an intense educational challenge they were not designed to meet.

What do I mean when I say these schools have been designed and are operated to fail? Let me paint a picture based on my 15 years of research and direct experience working in and with these schools.

These are schools in which less than a quarter of the students enter with even near grade-level skills. In a high school you can find half of the entering ninth-graders with reading and mathematics skills at the fifth-to seventh-grade levels, and another quarter with skills below those expected of fifth-graders. The ninth grade may have from 300 to 500 students, with perhaps 20 percent or more repeating the grade for a second time. Half or more of the entering students fell off the path to high school graduation as early as sixth grade, and during their middle grades missed a month or more of school each year. These same students were cited for demonstrating poor behavior, and/or failed their math and English classes. In addition, 15 percent to 20 percent of the students could be special education students and nearly 100 percent live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty.

Do we respond to this extremely high degree of educational challenge with the educational equivalent of the Marine Corps—the best trained, best equipped and motivated teachers and administrators? No. In fact, it is often just the opposite: These schools are the training grounds for the young and inexperienced; they often see at least half of their staff turn over every few years. In some, principals change as frequently as every year. A considerable number receive no title I funding, even though they face some of the greatest impacts of poverty of any school in the Nation. As a result, they cannot provide the level and intensity of support required for students to enter their classrooms ready to learn or the teacher supports and training required to effectively deliver standards-based courses to underprepared students.

There is shared responsibility for this failure. At the Federal level, there has been a lack of accountability and support for low-performing secondary schools. At the State level, there has been a failure to develop the capacity needed to support improvements in these schools, and the perpetuation of funding systems that make it difficult for dollars to be matched with student needs. At the local level, reform efforts have often focused elsewhere and simply re-arranging the deck chairs by changing principals or staff without addressing the underlying challenges has too often been seen as enough reform (a mistake that we must avoid repeating at the Federal level). Within the schools themselves, improvement is often stymied by the blame game with teachers, parents, and students (who must support one another for success to occur) too often saying nothing can be done until someone else works harder or better.

It does not have to be this way. Over the past decade we have amassed enough proof points to show that turnaround is possible. Middle and high schools can be designed and operated to succeed even when they exclusively serve high-needs students. It is possible to combine whole school reform with the teacher, administrator, and students supports needed to ensure that students can stay on track to graduate prepared for college, career and civic life, even when they enter middle and high school significantly off-track. More significantly, from these successes, as well as from our failures, we can deduce what is essential for turnaround to work.

In our own experience through our Talent Development Middle Grades and High Schools programs and most recently our collaborative Diplomas Now Secondary School Transformation model (a partnership of Talent Development, City Year, a national service program, and Communities in Schools, using early warning indicators to identify students as they begin to stray from the graduation path and to apply the right intervention to the right student at the right time), we have witnessed first-hand how this can be done. Our results have been validated by third-party research and by the Federal What Works Clearinghouse.

At our Baltimore Talent Development High School, located in one of the highest poverty communities in America, in sight of an open air drug corner, we take students who fit the profile described above—with below grade level skills and declining attachment to school—and graduate more than 80 percent of them with all graduates having a post-secondary schooling or job training placement. For those of you, like me, who believe the proof is in the pudding, we invite you to come up the road

and visit the school. At our three Diplomas Now high schools in the Recovery School District of New Orleans, we have been able to get ninth-grade attendance and passing rates to levels not seen in decades. At our Chicago Talent Development High School, which is operated in partnership with local, State, and national service employees and teachers' unions, we are recording ninth-grade success rates of 90 percent. This is critical because the evidence is clear: Students who make it to tenth grade on time and on track have three to four times the graduation rates of students who do not.

Fundamental to the success of all these schools is the teacher team—four to six teachers working with 75 to 100 students. The teacher teams, in turn, need to be supported by research- and evidence-based acceleration instructional programs for students who enter with below-grade-level skills. They also need strong State standards linked to benchmark assessments; good and consistent early warning data to let teachers respond to the first signs that a student is falling off track; time in their schedules for the teacher teams to meet and work collaboratively to improve their practice and to collectively meet student challenges, and assistance from a second shift of adults—national service corps members, counselors, and wrap-around student support providers—so that every student can get the assistance he or she needs to succeed. The teacher team also needs support from a school leadership team. And here too teamwork is essential. As important as they are in large middle or high schools, good principals cannot do it alone. With staffs of 100 or more there are too many adults to coordinate, support, encourage and guide. Thus, turnaround middle and high schools need leadership teams composed of principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders that are trained together, guide the school, and are held jointly accountable for school progress.

Thus, we applaud the Obama administration's efforts through ARRA and School Improvement Grants to elevate turning around high schools with graduation rates below 60 percent and their feeder middle schools into an urgent national priority by holding States and districts accountable for their transformation, as well as providing sufficient Federal support.

The work that remains through ESEA re-authorization is to create a Federal-State-local-community partnership to turn these schools around. Here, it is possible to draw several essential lessons from our own work and the larger body of research on school turnaround and improvement.

**The first lesson** is that it is not simply about how the school is governed and operated or who it employs. In the three examples I cited above, one school is a startup, three others were existing schools that are being turned around, and the last is a contract school. I have seen the strategy of closing low-performing schools and replacing them with new schools work well and poorly. I have seen schools that thoughtful and informed educators considered beyond repair, transform themselves. I have seen charter operators turn national disgraces into schools that succeed, but I have also seen charter schools that need to be shut down. I have seen schools come alive under the guidance of a new and invigorating leadership team. I have also seen highly skilled and committed principals chewed up by intransigent faculties. I have seen schools that replaced the faculty *twice* and were no better off. Governance and staff changes are a means to an end not an end in themselves.

**The second lesson** is that there are at least a dozen things one needs to get right to successfully turn around a school. This is why turnaround is difficult and our success rate has been low. If you look at prior efforts, you also see that in the main we have approached turnaround as an amateur endeavor via instinct trial and error, usually in ignorance of prior efforts and often without even an attempt to address the full range of challenges in turnaround schools. Thus, the low success rate to date is not surprising. What we need to do is make school turnaround a professional effort grounded in analysis and knowledge—one in which evidence-based reforms are matched to the challenges faced, and we strategically deduce the quickest way to implement them well and quickly.

In short, schools do not succeed and are organized for failure when their implemented design does not match their educational challenge.

Educational challenge in turn has three inter-related components:

**Academic challenge:** How far away from required standards of performance are students when they enter a school? It matters greatly whether there are 20 or 200 students who are 2 or more years below grade level.

**Engagement challenge:** The greatest teachers and instructional program in the world will have little impact if students do not attend, behave, and try. Yet in many high-poverty middle and high schools, especially in urban areas, chronic absenteeism is rampant. In one city we examined, 40 percent of middle and high school students missed in total a year of schooling over 5 years, 20 percent of their educational time. This is how achievement gaps grow.

**Poverty challenge:** It is often hard for policymakers and others who do not live in poverty to comprehend its impact on school success. Poverty taxes student and school success through a number of means. It keeps some students out of school to provide emergency day care for younger siblings, so parents can keep their job; others stay home to give the grandparents who are raising them their daily insulin shots. It pushes some students to drop out to help earn money to pay the utility bill or keep food on the table. It engulfs others in continual exposure to violence and the grief of losing family members. Others are consumed by the stress of parents losing jobs and homes or succumbing to drug and alcohol addiction. In our innovation high school in West Baltimore, faculty members estimate that 15 percent to 20 percent of our students are essentially raising themselves. Schools can mobilize when a handful of students are in these situations. They become overwhelmed when, as is often the case in middle and high schools in high-poverty neighborhoods, it is dozens to more than 100 students.

While schools in need of turnaround are often similar in terms of facing high academic, engagement and poverty challenges, they also differ in the contours, magnitude, and intensity of these challenges, as well as in their existing capacities to meet them. Thus, it is essential that each be analyzed on its own, so that reforms can be matched to needs. We also have to keep in mind that every school in need of a turnaround likely has been attempting to reform and improve for a decade or more. So it is also important to analyze why prior reform efforts have failed and what pockets of capacity may remain. The quickest way to doom a school turnaround effort is to impose a reform that most adults and students in the building believe was already tried and failed.

With a thorough understanding of the educational challenge a school faces and its current capabilities, it is then possible to create an educational design that can turn the school around. For the design to work, however, it must navigate four hurdles: It needs to be based on appropriate **know-how**; the school needs the **capacity** to put it into place; the adults and students in the building need to have the **will** to implement it with fidelity and speed, and finally, the effort needs to be protected from the policy and practice **turbulence** that can derail it.

Before we get too depressed and ask how it will be possible to accomplish this at the scale we need, it helps to look at some other sectors of society, the level of complexity they handle and how they succeed. If we look at medicine, the military, and business, we see that problems with this level of complexity are routinely solved.

To close this testimony, I will try to advance a case for a Federal role in enabling school turnaround to succeed at scale by looking at how we can increase the Nation's ability to apply the lessons of other sectors and create the know-how, capacity, will, and ability to mitigate turbulence we need.

INCREASE THE KNOW-HOW TO MEET ACADEMIC, ENGAGEMENT, AND POVERTY  
CHALLENGES IN LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS

The military, medicine and business all invest much more in applied research and development, or how to solve problems of practice. Moreover, what is known is widely disseminated and turned into protocols or standards of practice. Using such standards is viewed as essential for practitioners in the field, and lack of use, absent compelling circumstances, is sanctioned. The military and medicine routinely study instances in which standard practices fail and use this knowledge to improve and innovate. In terms of turning around low-performing middle and high schools, we have learned enough in the past decade to begin formulating standards of practice.

What is required to move this forward is a public-private partnership along the lines of the Data Quality Campaign and the State Common Standards, supported by Federal policy. For areas where current understanding is less clear, we need an aggressive federally supported applied research and development effort.

One clear candidate for this is extended learning time. Most successful turnaround efforts have found one way or another to extend student learning time. We do not know enough, however, to say how this should be done and how it will vary by circumstances. Is it better to extend the school day, the school week, or the school year? How should the extra time best be used? What is the most effective balance between more time on core academics and experiences that deeply engage students in school and learning like drama, debate, and robotics? The answer is we don't know. We could find out quickly, and in so doing, save ourselves from making expensive investments that don't pay off. The question of how best to extend learning time lends itself to rapid analytic study. By randomizing four or so different approaches to extending learning time across enough schools, within a few years we would know the effectiveness and the costs and benefits of the different approaches.

## INCREASE OUR CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE TURNAROUND STRATEGIES

Building our capacity to turn around schools is in my view our current No. 1 weakness and greatest need. We need to invest in capacity building efforts at the State, district, and school levels. Schools in need of turnaround should be paired with external partners or school district or State support teams with proven track records. We need to make sure that sufficient funds are set aside in school improvement grants or by other means so that this assistance can be hands-on, in the school, and continuous. We also need to provide turnaround teams and external support partners with the conditions needed for success such as control over staffing, budget, and scheduling. There is also a new role for national non-profits that can inject capacity into schools by providing high-quality student supports and management strategies that needs to be developed and supported. Organizations such as City Year, Communities in Schools, the Boys and Girls Club, the U.S. Army through JROTC, and College Summit, among others, are rapidly developing the ability to project high-quality student supports nationwide, and need to become tightly integrated into turnaround efforts.

Next, we need to greatly increase the intensity of training we provide to educators. When you compare typical on-the-job training in education to that of medicine, military or industry, you see how light it is. Short days and short weeks, crammed in when opportunity allows, uncoordinated and often of low quality compared to the high-intensity, dawn-to-dusk, mandatory attendance, training with accountability for implementation one can find in other sectors.

## BUILD ACCOUNTABILITY AND ON-TRACK INDICATOR SYSTEMS THAT ENCOURAGE AND SUSTAIN THE WILL TO IMPLEMENT NEEDED REFORMS WITH SPEED AND FIDELITY

To develop the will to implement needed reforms quickly and with skill takes accountability systems that send the right signals. At the high school level this means counting graduation rates equally with test scores as essential outcomes. We need every student to graduate prepared for post-secondary success. It also means establishing a national baseline for continuous and substantial progress in raising graduation rates. If each of the 5,000 high schools with graduation rates below the current national average (of approximately 75 percent) increased its rate, on average, 2 percentage points per year for 10 years, the national graduation rate would hit 90 percent. This is an attainable goal and should become the minimum progress viewed as acceptable.

For us to monitor turnaround efforts and be able to change those that are not working, we need to adopt on-track to success indicators. The emerging science of on- and off-track indicators for high school graduation and college readiness, as well as benchmark tests tied to the new common State standards, can be used to create indicators for school progress that will let us know if schools are on track to meet their achievement and graduation improvement targets, and will keep schools focused on essential actions. We also need to support turnaround options that build teachers' beliefs that large scale improvement is possible. One way to do this is to create and enable teacher-led school turnaround efforts. Turnaround should not be seen as something done *to* teachers, but rather an effort that they lead, and hence, are responsible for.

## WORK TO MITIGATE TURBULENCE, IN POLICY AND PRACTICE

For turnaround to work, we need to insist on high-intensity and rapid implementations of school reform efforts designed to meet a school's educational challenge. We also need to provide the stability for these efforts to take root and bear fruit. This means that the Federal Government, in partnership with States, should insist that effective reforms supported by Federal and State dollars are not changed simply because a new school superintendent with a new vision for district improvement arrives or a new principal takes charge.

The Federal Government also needs to insure that schools that have successfully turned around can still gain access to the resources necessary to meet their educational challenges and overcome the achievement and engagement drains brought by poverty. This means we need to think flexibly and creatively about how title I resources or dedicated secondary school success funds can be targeted and available for all high-poverty middle and high schools that meet continuing performance criteria. Recall our Baltimore Talent Development High School. Its success does not negate that fact that almost all its students live in poverty, 15 percent to 20 percent are functionally raising themselves, many are essentially caring for younger siblings and family members, and three-fourths enter with skills 2 or more years below grade level. To meet these needs and overcome the additional educational challenges

they bring, resources are required, over and above the funding provided to schools with far fewer challenges. At its heart, the purpose of title 1 funds is to help schools overcome the impact of poverty. Secondary schools that face these challenges need to have full access to this support.

IN CONCLUSION

Members of the Senate HELP committee have been at the forefront of the effort to create a Federal-State-local partnership to transform the Nation's low-performing secondary schools. Much of what is needed in ESEA Reauthorization to enable successful secondary school turnaround exists in the legislation members of this committee have advanced. Chairman Harkin's Every Student Counts Act, Senator Bingaman's Graduation Promise Act, Senator Reed's Success in the Middle, The Keeping PACE Act, Senators Franken's and Hatch's School Principal and Training Act, and the Serve America Act, among others, contain essential elements of what is needed. We also need to support the widespread adoption and use of early warning and intervention systems in conjunction with school transformation and turnaround. I have offered a few additional ideas and suggestions based on our on-the-ground experience and existing evidence and research. The bottom line is that the time is now to make reforming the Nation's low-performing secondary schools a vital national mission. A Federal-State-local partnership designed to accomplish this, guided and supported by ESEA reauthorization, can fundamentally transform the Nation for the better.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Balfanz, thank you very much. That was very enlightening. I have a lot of questions I have got to ask now based on that.

Now we turn to Dr. Mitchell. Dr. Mitchell, welcome, and please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF TIM MITCHELL, Ed.D, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, CHAMBERLAIN SCHOOL DISTRICT 7-1, CHAMBERLAIN, SD**

Mr. MITCHELL. Good afternoon, Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Enzi and members of the committee. It is certainly an honor to come before you today and share some thoughts about rural school turnaround, specifically the unique challenges faced by rural schools when implementing school improvement strategies, as well as some of the conditions I feel are necessary so rural school reforms can be successful.

Let me tell you a little bit about Chamberlain School District. This fall we had 858 students. We are 30 out of 161 in enrollment in South Dakota. We are a large school in South Dakota. Of the 131 that are smaller than us, many of them have fewer than 300 students, K-12, in their entire facility. Many of them still run one-room schoolhouses, just as Senator Harkin made reference to in his opening remarks.

In Chamberlain, 46 percent of economically disadvantaged students are part of our student body. Thirty-six percent are Native American. They come from the Crow Creek Sioux and Lower Brule Sioux. They have dual enrollment privileges either coming to the public school, which we serve them, and then the tribal school, which they have a choice to go to. Seventeen percent of the students qualify for special education. Fifty-nine percent of the students are identified as title I, and we employ about 140 full- and part-time staff.

OK. Where were we? Before No Child Left Behind, when I took over the reins of Chamberlain School District—we have three school sites. Two of them were identified as 13 in the State that had not met Federal standards under title I. We went into No

Child Left Behind. We were immediately put on alert because of not making AYP with the Native American students, the economically disadvantaged students, and the students with disabilities.

In the spring of 2008, the Native American economically disadvantaged, the students with disabilities, and all schools and all subgroups made AYP. And we had our first clean NCLB report card. The Native American students, the economically disadvantaged students, and the students with disabilities continued to exceed the State average for proficiency in both reading and math.

So what did we do? If I have to identify it, if we look at our turnaround process, we had to become a school district that has a relentless focus on instruction and professional development. We had to cultivate teacher and principal support. We had to implement and use research-based instructional practices and strategies and then make a conscious effort and encourage all staff to act collegially and collaboratively among those staff members.

The major theme of our story, as I talk to other districts that ask me how we did it, is all about capacity building, and the best way to build capacity in a school district is to transform them into a true professional learning community, which we see in the literature.

Those fundamentals are, first, to make learning the purpose of your organization. You must establish a focus on learning, not just teaching. It is not good enough to just teach in my district. You must promote high levels of learning.

Second, you will not achieve a true focus on learning when teachers are working in isolation. You can have a teacher of the year working right next to a first-year teacher in the same school, and if they are not allowed to share back and forth, you will definitely affect your quality in a negative way. So you want to make sure that isolation is brought into collaboration.

Then you must create systems and structures to build those collaborative structures on a regular basis.

And finally, our third major focus is you must know if students are learning or not. So you must have a system to monitor student learning and to be governed by results.

The most pressing issues we see in rural schools: isolation, the amount of capacity, the recruitment and retention of administrative teaching staff, the lack of quality preschools, the NCLB punitive consequences that are designed more for urban schools, and the adequate financial resources here in these troubled times. Add lack of parental involvement, low graduation rates, the impact of drugs, gangs, poverty on many of the low-performing rural reservation schools, and we have some real issues.

With all the issues, there is a terrible stigma about being a failed school in a small rural and isolated community. Many of these school districts have administrators and teachers who are dedicated. They are working hard every day to try to improve that learning situation. Many of these schools currently have trouble holding onto administrators for more than 1 or 2 years. In many rural schools, the superintendent is the principal. He is the coach. He is the janitor. He is the bus driver. And so the entire administration is lost and they simply move a short distance to another school district if a turnaround process is put in place.

In these situations, the principals and staff need to stay. Threatening to fire administrators and teachers and closing schools in isolated rural areas does not make any common sense.

If we look at the conditions that are needed, as we start to flesh out what the next reauthorization is going to look like, we would hope that you would look at making sure that we provide adequate resources, that we support operating conditions, and we support administrator and teacher training to being about that cultural change that is needed.

We promoted our school turnaround process in a mixture of local, State, and Federal revenue sources, and we utilized those effectively to build capacity so that we could implement research-based instructional strategies. Most schools like Chamberlain have a limited capacity. So make sure to understand that if you are going to shift new Federal dollars to competitive grants, it would be inherently unfair for us to compete with other districts because of a lack of capacity, and we certainly want to make sure that we see the increased funding for title I because the current proposal is for level funding.

As we look at accountability, we know it is not helping our schools in rural South Dakota and rural areas, and measures are too narrow and imprecise and consequences are too severe. The four turnaround models are not appropriate for a majority of rural and small schools. I support a recommendation to add a fifth option. This is to be able to implement a research-based intervention model that is reserved in the Blueprint for simply Reward districts. Consider the distinction between positive accountability where low scores trigger an effort to help schools and punitive accountability where we focus on firing staff and closing schools. In a strategy of positive accountability, consistent research-based, proven steps can be taken to improve low-performing schools.

Thank you for your time today, and I will be happy to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mitchell follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TIM MITCHELL, Ed.D.

SUMMARY

CHAMBERLAIN SCHOOL DISTRICT 7-1

Chamberlain School District 7-1 is located in Chamberlain, SD. Fall Enrollment was 858 students. Economically Disadvantaged students make up 46 percent of the student body, Native American students make up 36 percent of the student population, 17 percent of the students qualify for Special Education services and 59 percent of the students are identified as title I. The district employs 140 full and part-time staff.

ACHIEVEMENT GAINS

In the spring 2008 the Native American, Economically Disadvantaged, and Students with Disabilities subgroups made Adequate Yearly Progress and the Chamberlain School District 7-1 had the first clean NCLB Report Card. Native American, Economically Disadvantaged, and Students with Disabilities subgroups continue to exceed the State average for proficiency in both math and reading.

THE CHAMBERLAIN TURNAROUND STORY

To identify what has helped Chamberlain School District 7-1 in the turnaround process has been a relentless focus on instruction and professional development; the cultivation of teacher and principal support; the use of researched-based instruc-

tional practices and strategies; and the conscious encouragement of collegiality and collaboration among all staff members.

#### THE CHALLENGES FOR RURAL SCHOOLS

The most pressing issues that are currently affecting small rural schools are isolation, capacity, the recruitment and retention of administrative and teaching staff, lack of quality pre-schools, NCLB punitive consequences that are designed more for urban schools and adequate financial resources in these troubling economic times. Add the lack of parental involvement, low graduation rates, the impact of drugs and gangs and poverty to many of the low performing rural reservation schools in South Dakota and the most pressing issues significantly increase.

#### THE CONDITION NEEDED FOR SUCCESS

The turnaround process requires adequate funding, supporting operating conditions, and administrator and teacher training to bring about cultural change.

#### ESEA RECOMMENDATIONS

Accountability as we know it now is not helping our schools. Its measures are too narrow and imprecise and the consequences are too severe. The four turnaround models are not appropriate for a majority of rural and small schools. I support the recommendation of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) that proposes a 5th option for school turnaround. This is to be able to implement a research-based intervention model, reserved in the blueprint for Reward districts.

Good Afternoon Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Enzi and members of the committee, my name is Tim Mitchell and I am the Superintendent of Schools for the Chamberlain School District 7-1 in Chamberlain, SD. It is an honor to come before you today and share some thoughts on rural school turnaround. Specifically, the unique challenges faced by rural schools when implementing school improvement strategies as well as some of the conditions I feel are necessary so rural school reform efforts can be successful. I would also like to share some recommendations for how a reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act can support and promote successful school turnaround in rural areas.

#### CHAMBERLAIN SCHOOL DISTRICT 7-1

Located along Interstate 90, in south-central South Dakota along the Missouri River, the Chamberlain School District 7-1 is made up of parts of three counties, Brule, Buffalo and Lyman. The district covers 853 square miles. Part of the Crow Creek Indian Reservation lies within the district (Buffalo County-referred to as one of the poorest counties in the Nation). The city of Chamberlain, population approximately 2,400, is the area's primary trade center. Chamberlain is the site of the school district's administration building, a senior high/middle school (Grade 7-12), and an elementary school (Grade K-6). The 2009-2010 fall enrollment was 858 students. Economically disadvantaged students make up 46 percent of the student body, Native American students make up 36 percent of the student population, 17 percent of the students qualify for special education services and 59 percent of the students are identified as title I. The elementary school supports a schoolwide title I program and in 2010-2011 the middle school will be a schoolwide title I program.

The district employs 140 full and part-time staff. About 95 are certified teachers, who bring to Chamberlain School District 7-1 a wide range of experiences and educational backgrounds (average experience level 16.2 years). Including special service staff members, such as speech therapists, music teachers, guidance counselors and physical education instructors, the average pupil-teacher ratio in the district is 11.2 to 1. Class sizes are small which provides for more one-on-one contact between teachers and students. The school district's administrative staff is made up of the superintendent, business manager, and two building principals. In the fall of 2008 a part-time assistant grade 7-12 principal was added. A special education director, transportation director, title I director, buildings and grounds supervisor, technology director, special education social worker, and activities director serve in supervisory roles in the district.

#### ACHIEVEMENT GAINS

In the spring of 2003 in the Chamberlain School District 7-1, 27 percent of Native American students tested were Advanced/Proficient in Math and 45 percent were Advanced/Proficient in Reading, only 49 percent of the Economically Disadvantaged

student population were Advanced/Proficient in Math and 62 percent were Advanced/Proficient in Reading, only 7 percent of Students with Disabilities were Advanced/Proficient in Math and only 22 percent were Advanced/Proficient in Reading. The Native American, Economically Disadvantaged, and Students with Disabilities subgroups did not make Adequate Yearly Progress and the Elementary and Middle School were identified as being on No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Alert.

In the spring of 2009, 63 percent of Native American students tested were Advanced/Proficient in Math and 61 percent of Native American students tested were Advanced/Proficient in Reading, 62 percent of Economically Disadvantaged students were Advanced/Proficient in Math and 74 percent of Economically Disadvantaged students were Advanced/Proficient in Reading, 43 percent of Students with Disabilities were Advanced/Proficient, and 51 percent of Students with Disabilities were Advanced/Proficient in Reading. In the spring 2008 the Native American, Economically Disadvantaged, and Students with Disabilities subgroups made Adequate Yearly Progress and the Chamberlain School District 7-1 had the first clean NCLB Report Card. Native American, Economically Disadvantaged, and Students with Disabilities subgroups continue to exceed the State average for proficiency in both math and reading. These types of achievement gains continue to be recorded as the district celebrates some of the highest student achievement gains in the history of the district.

#### THE CHAMBERLAIN TURNAROUND STORY

To identify what has helped Chamberlain School District 7-1 in the turnaround process has been a relentless focus on instruction and professional development; the cultivation of teacher and principal support; the use of researched-based instructional practices and strategies; and the conscious encouragement of collegiality and collaboration among all staff members. This has created a culture that encourages professionals to take risks and to take responsibility for themselves, their students and for each other.

The major theme of our story is centered on capacity building. Michael Fullan defines capacity building as an action-based and powerful policy or strategy that increases the collective efficacy of a group to improve student learning through new knowledge, enhanced resources, and greater motivation on the part of the people working individually and together. You need to create conditions for people to succeed by helping people find meaning, increasing their skill development and their personal satisfaction while they make contributions that simultaneously fulfill their own goals and the goals of the organization. My own research in South Dakota found that the most innovative school districts are those that have the ability to sustain school reform, organizational change and increased student achievement have a greater professional capacity.

The best way to build the capacity of a school district is to transform it into a professional learning community. This is the work of Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, and Robert Eaker. First, you need to make learning the fundamental purpose of the organization. You must establish a focus on learning not on teaching. Second, schools will not achieve a true focus on learning when teachers are working in isolation. You must create systems and structures that build a collaborative structure. Third, you must know if students are learning or not. You must have a system to monitor student learning and be governed by results.

A focus on learning means that the district has systems and structures in place to make sure students learn what they need to learn to be successful. We have created an intensive focus on learning by clarifying exactly what students are to learn by establishing an aligned curriculum. Once we established an aligned curriculum we provided support through an extensive professional development program to support teachers in their utilization of researched-based instructional strategies to deliver the curriculum. The next step was to establish a robust assessment system. Teachers have been trained in the creation and use of common formative assessment procedures to get instant feedback from students on how well they are doing. This feedback guides decisions as to appropriate remediation or enrichment that must be provided to ensure the learning occurs.

The next thing we recognized as a critical issue was that a district can not accomplish a high level of learning for all students unless all staff members work together collaboratively. The collaborative team has become one of the fundamental building blocks of our culture. Staff need to be organized into structures that allow them to engage in meaningful collaboration that is beneficial to them and their students. Extensive professional development was required to make the collaboration effective. Collaborative time can be squandered if educators do not use the time to focus on issues most related to teaching and learning.

To be governed by results means that teachers need to continually assess their effectiveness on the basis of results. They need instant, tangible evidence that their students are acquiring the knowledge and skills that are essential to their success. We have created a data system where curriculum and achievement data are stored together so teachers can get instant feedback to help them provide remediation and enrichment as needed. We have found that all students can learn if given the time they need. Our data analysis has helped us to design extended learning opportunities for various students so remediation and enrichment are provided in a variety of ways.

In the Chamberlain School District 7-1 we ask all the members of our organization to come to school each day and make the following commitments:

- Align and utilize the South Dakota Content Standards to provide a guaranteed and viable curriculum for all students;
- Develop, implement, and evaluate on a regular basis a School Improvement Plan that targets specific instructional areas and students identified by data analysis;
- Engage in meaningful, job-embedded staff development to enhance professional skills;
- Initiate individual and small group instructional programs to provide additional learning time for students;
- Provide families with resources, strategies, and information to help children succeed academically;
- Utilize a variety of researched-based instructional strategies to promote success for all students; and
- Develop and implement effective local assessments and administer State assessments as directed.

#### THE CHALLENGES FOR RURAL SCHOOLS

The most pressing issues that are currently affecting small rural schools are isolation, capacity, the recruitment and retention of administrative and teaching staff, lack of quality pre-schools, NCLB punitive consequences that are designed more for urban schools and adequate financial resources in these troubling economic times. Add the lack of parental involvement, low graduation rates, the impact of drugs and gangs and poverty to many of the low-performing rural reservation schools in South Dakota and the most pressing issues significantly increase.

The isolation geographically from large urban areas creates a continued shortage of high quality instructional learning opportunities for staff that are just not available in isolated rural areas. The lack of access to these capacity building activities seriously hampers the ability to support high quality instruction if the teachers are not supported. Any opportunities to network with others in their field are also limited. In a small rural school it is not unusual to see the superintendent hold many roles in the organization. They can also be the principal, grant writer, staff development coordinator, curriculum coordinator, coach, and then drive the bus. Can one person hold all these jobs and have time to build the capacity of the organization let alone build their own capacity to lead a high quality learning organization? This is why rural schools are asking that the proposal of making new Federal dollars, with the exception of title I that will remain formula-driven, available only through competitive grants be reconsidered. The time and capacity are not available in rural schools to complete and submit competitive grants. Rural schools are at a great disadvantage in this type of competition with larger urban schools. In South Dakota, the lack of funding and an inability of the State legislature to pass standards have severely limited pre-school opportunities to make sure students are prepared for school. In some low performing districts Head Start can only serve 25 percent of the eligible students. If funding and standards were available in South Dakota to provide effective and quality pre-schools more students would be ready and prepared to enter school. NCLB consequences will also not work in small rural areas for many reasons. Threatening to close schools, fire administrators and teachers in areas that get few applicants is not a viable turnaround strategy.

It is hard to imagine how different a school district is when they serve 90-100 percent Native American students on a reservation in South Dakota. The history of distrust that native people have for educational institutions is still prevalent. Many of these districts are at a loss as to how to overcome the lack of parental involvement. It is hard to explain the impact of politics of the reservation schools. Many students see that it is possible to survive on the reservation at poverty level and it is hard to convince them they need to graduate when 80 percent of the adults they know do not have a high school diploma. Many of these schools do not have the resources to provide a safe environment for learning. Gangs and drugs have

taken hold in these communities and continue to affect the overall learning in these situations. It has become almost impossible to provide a safe and secure learning environment.

With all these issues the stigma of being a failed school really has a negative impact on these small, rural, and isolated communities. Many of these school districts have administrators and teachers who are dedicated and working very hard every day to try to improve the learning in these situations. Many of these school districts currently have trouble holding onto administrators for more than 1 or 2 years. In many rural schools the superintendent is the principal so then the entire administration is lost or they simply move a short distance to another school district. With all the hard work they are making progress and show growth but they know that they will never be able to reach the bar. In these situations the principals and staff need to stay as the turnaround process may be slow but growth is being realized. Threatening to fire administrators and teachers and close the school in isolated rural areas does not make common sense. We need to give State Education Agencies the flexibility in working with these small, rural situations.

#### THE CONDITION NEEDED FOR SUCCESS

The turnaround process in the Chamberlain School District 7-1 was funded through the use of a mixture of local, State and Federal revenue sources. Federal revenue sources (title I, title II Part A & D, title IV, title VI and Impact Aide) provided by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act have provided much-needed funding for capacity building activities as well as to implement researched-based educational programming that have significantly helped to increase student achievement for Native American, Economically Disadvantaged, and Students with Disabilities. These funds were provided under the current formula grant program. I would hope that additional dollars can be found to increase funding for title I because the current proposal is for level funding. Most rural schools like Chamberlain also have a limited capacity and shifting to more competitive grants for new Federal dollars I believe would be inherently unfair to rural school districts. Relying on competitive grants could take the much-needed funding from small rural schools. It would be very difficult for us to compete with school districts that have a greater capacity and expertise in this area. I would recommend that Congress continue to grow formula grants to support a more reliable stream of funding to support turnaround efforts in rural schools. I do want to mention that The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds were also utilized for the 2009-2010 school year. I would certainly like to thank the committee and Congress for the strong investment they have made in education through this program. Capacity building, which is an essential component to our turnaround success, is resource intensive and adequate funding is critical.

To engineer a successful school turnaround you need to create a structure of supporting operating conditions. The Federal Government has to be flexible and allow rural school leaders to make decisions regarding staff, schedules, budget and program based upon the mission, strategy and data for each unique rural school. The turnaround process must be locally controlled.

External efforts to improve schools invariably focus on structural changes. Meaningful, substantive, sustainable improvement can only occur if it becomes anchored in the culture of the organization. Bringing about cultural change in any organization is a complex and challenging task. The challenge facing educational leaders and teachers is to become skillful in the change process. That is why I support Federal resources targeted to provide training to improve the effectiveness of teachers and leaders in high-needs schools especially in rural areas as outlined in the blueprint.

#### ESEA RECOMMENDATIONS

Accountability as we know it now is not helping our schools. Its measures are too narrow and imprecise and the consequences are too severe. NCLB assumes that accountability based solely on test scores will reform schools. I believe this is a mistake. A good accountability system must include not just a simple test score but other measures of student achievement. It should also include a review of the resources being provided to schools to assess their ability to build capacity to be successful.

Consider the distinction between positive accountability, where low scores trigger an effort to help schools and punitive accountability where we focus on firing staff and closing schools. In a strategy of positive accountability consistent, researched-based, proven steps are taken to improve low performing schools. There are many examples across the Nation that point to this strategy as being very productive.

This is something that small rural schools can do if given the resources to make it happen.

In the NCLB era and included in the new "Blueprint for Reform" you will find recommended turnaround models that are very prescriptive and propose consequences that include firing of principals and staff and even closing schools. This is punitive accountability where low scores simply provide reasons to trigger dire consequences for staff, students, parents and communities. The four turnaround models are not appropriate for a majority of rural and small schools. It would be very difficult for a small rural community in our Nation to implement any of the four prescribed models. I support the recommendation of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) that proposes a 5th option for school turnaround. This is to be able to implement a research-based intervention model, reserved in the blueprint for Reward districts. This should be available for the lowest-performing districts. This would be an example of a positive versus punitive nature that would allow schools and districts to receive a school turnaround grant to implement a researched-based capacity building option. They would need to supply information as to how they are going to implement a turnaround process that is a replication of what other successful turnaround schools have implemented and how it is appropriate to their situation based upon a thorough data analysis.

We have known for years that we need to improve schools but I have some grave concerns about some of the school reform efforts in vogue today. Efforts that set out to improve schools by applying more and more severe sanctions. The problems confronting quality rural school development have never been the result of lack of effort or lack of caring among educators. We have taken good people and put them in struggling systems. It is time to quit blaming the people and to transform the system. Educators are ready to play a key role in this transformation. If there is one thing educators know, and many studies have confirmed, there is no single answer or silver bullet. We simply must turn our attention to the research behind what makes a great school in rural areas and replicate the successful practices already in place in those schools. We must turn our attention to improving schools by focusing on learning and reviving the conditions that make learning possible.

Thank you for your time today and I would be happy to answer any questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Very good. That is great. Thank you very much, Dr. Mitchell.

Now we turn to close out our panel. Mr. Petruzzi, welcome again. Please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF MARCO PETRUZZI, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, GREEN DOT PUBLIC SCHOOLS, LOS ANGELES, CA**

Mr. PETRUZZI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

I will go to the other extreme in Los Angeles. I am here to testify on behalf of Green Dot Public Schools and our work to turn around Locke High School in Watts, one of the most chronically under-performing schools in the State of California and in the Nation. This is a school that had only a 25 percent graduation rate of its entering freshman class 4 years later, and we are on the path to moving that graduation rate to 60 to 80 percent by the end of the first 4 years.

I am going to start a little bit with the history of Green Dot and where we started. We operate in a district, LAUSD, that is the second largest in the Nation, second only to New York. It is larger than 25 States in the Nation. It is larger than a lot of European nations in terms of number of students, and the size of our high schools averaged 3,500 students just 3 years ago. So actually probably a single high school like Locke is actually larger than most districts, than 50 percent of the districts in the Nation. The problems are tremendous.

Green Dot started with a mission to reform education in Los Angeles, which was a very ambitious mission, and to make sure and

ensure that all students have access to an education that ensures them success in college, leadership, and life.

We started like many charter management organizations by building independent charter schools, and we built 10 at first in the most poverty-stricken areas in Los Angeles, and we had great success. These are areas where students were having a 60–70 percent dropout rate, and we were actually sending 60 to 80 percent of our students to college. So we had a 5 to 8 times effect on those student populations.

Having said that, when we looked at the magnitude of the problem in Los Angeles and the size of the issue, we realized that we needed to get into the world of turnarounds of these chronic performing schools because with 700,000 students—700 schools in Los Angeles, of which 250 were failing—we felt that that was the imperative, to actually intervene in those large failing schools.

A group of teachers at Locke High School, which was the lowest-performing school in Los Angeles—nobody will accuse us to go into an easy first school. This is a school that is in a very difficult neighborhood. It is 100 percent minority. It is about 35 percent African-American, 65 percent Latino. It is a gateway community for recent immigrants. There are a lot of gang tension. It is at the intersection of the Bloods and the Crypts and several Latino gangs and was basically a very toxic school in every possible way you can imagine. Gangs were controlling classrooms. There were race riots. And the students—when you walked it, you couldn't tell if it was passing period or it was class time. The basic infrastructure of the school had just failed.

The teachers signed for Green Dot to take over. We had a core group of teachers, young teachers who were idealistic who wanted to change the school, and frankly a bunch of teachers who had given up and they just felt that it could not be done and they were happy to leave us the school. We asked everybody to reapply to the school. We are 2 years into it.

Our basic tenet was to use the learnings that we had from our independent charter schools. So make small schools first. We guaranteed our students that every one of our adults knows every student's name. We do not believe that anybody can learn more than 500 names. We cap our schools at around 500. So we broke down Locke, which is now 3,200 students, into eight schools. We started with ninth grade academies that capture the incoming ninth-graders, and we kept them very separate from the tenth to twelfth graders to create a new culture at the school. A lot of personalization in the student plans.

We also brought in a lot of feeling of safety at the school by bringing adults and training all adults on having respectful conversations with the students and actually really turning the student into a haven from the ultra-violence that was around them in the community.

The culture of the school has improved dramatically in over just 1 year. First of all, the students are attending class. The school is graffiti-free. The attendance has gone up 12 percent, and in just the first year, we basically stopped the dropout rate. We retained over 40 percent more students than the year before, and we had a huge cultural shift where the students are now thinking about

college in positive terms compared to a statistic before where only 5 percent of the kids went to college.

Now, clearly, we are humbled by the difficulty of this task. These are students that come into ninth grade reading and doing math at about a third and fourth grade level, and we absolutely put everybody on a college track. We do not believe that adults should be making decisions for students about going to college. We believe the students need to make that decision. So everybody is in a college prep track. We offer a lot of intervention for the students that are farthest behind, but we believe that everybody should be there.

We think this is good work, and I appreciate the committee's work on turnarounds. We need to create the conditions for more turnarounds like this to happen, which are not easy, but they are absolutely essential. I do not believe that there is a choice of not doing turnarounds. Some of them will fail, but even if we have a 50 percent failure rate, what is the other option? Not trying to do something for those kids is impossible.

So I would ask and I would recommend to the committee that we create the conditions for the flexibility that we enjoyed as a charter conversion in terms of staffing—every staff member had to reapply for the school—for the ability that we have to actually move funds around across schools. We created eight different schools with eight different principals with different budgets. Those flexibilities were extremely important for creating a culture of accountability and an ownership by the adults on the campus and also, frankly, the students regarding where they belong. This is important work that we would love to repeat and we would hope that the conditions are set by this committee so that this can be repeated across the Nation.

Thank you so much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Petruzzi follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARCO PETRUZZI

SUMMARY

Marco Petruzzi will testify before the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee on Green Dot's successful charter schools and its transformation of the 3,000 student Locke High School. In 2007 Locke High School was in such poor condition that teachers working in the school petitioned the Los Angeles Unified School District of California to transfer school management to Green Dot Public Schools. As a result, over the last year Green Dot has worked to transform Locke High School, create a safe learning environment for students, raise graduation rates and increase student achievement. To do this Green Dot has implemented a series of school turnaround strategies including:

- Implementing a new governance structure focused on small personalized academies.
- Creating a culture of excellent education with high expectations for student success.
- Training and supporting highly effective teachers and leaders.
- Providing a safe and respectful learning environment for students, staff and parents.

Locke High School is in the middle of its second academic year under Green Dot management. Student achievement results for this year are not yet available. However, there are strong indications that the transformation will have a significant, positive effect on student achievement. Some early indicators include:

- Green Dot retained approximately 500 more students than LAUSD had the previous year (2008) at Locke.
- Attendance increased by 12 percent.
- Suspensions involving drugs or violence have shrunk from 21 percent of all suspensions to only 5 percent.

- Graduation rate rose by 15 percentage points.
- Parent and student surveys indicate that stakeholders feel safer and more supported.

Turning around persistently low-performing schools is extremely challenging. Green Dot's work has proven that it can be done, but only with flexibility in school governance, strong student supports and committed, talented teachers and school leaders. As such, Green Dot proposes the following recommendations for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary School Act:

- Provide local flexibility for school administrators to restructure failing schools to more effectively meet the needs of the community. This must include authority to use and implement the four elements of reform that Green Dot implemented in Locke High School (new school governance, personalized instruction, effective teachers and leaders, safe and healthy schools).
- Increase the level of student supports, including academic and nonacademic supports that meet the comprehensive needs of struggling students and accelerate the learning and achievement of all students. This may include wraparound health and wellness services and afterschool programs.
- Provide resources for appropriate, scientifically valid instructional interventions or other academic support services, specifically for reading and math. This may include extended learning time for struggling students.
- Incentivize strategies aligning academic standards, curricula, and assessments with college-readiness requirements.
- Provide funding for high-quality teacher and leader residency programs to recruit and train highly effective teachers and leaders.
- Provide high-quality job-embedded professional development for teachers and leaders. This must include built-in time to share best practices and evaluate peer performance.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Thank you Chairman Harkin, Senator Enzi, and all the members of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of Green Dot Public Schools. It is my hope that our efforts to effectively turn around Locke High School and the strategies we used to do so can be replicated to help improve schools across the country. We share the committee's goal to provide quality education for every child. We need a world-class education system to meet the demands of a global economy. As members of this committee, you have a tremendous challenge and an amazing opportunity to transform the Nation's education system through the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary School Act. I am grateful for the opportunity to share our experience to date and the challenges and opportunities we see ahead.

#### GREEN DOT CHARTER SCHOOLS

Thirty years ago, California schools and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) in particular, were considered models of kindergarten through university education. Since then, California has dropped to 46th nationally in per pupil funding and LAUSD has one of the highest dropout rates in the country. Faced with the unacceptable prospect of losing another generation of students to illiteracy, delinquency, and a life of poverty, Green Dot Public Schools was created to help reform and transform LAUSD schools. It has been a daunting task, but 10 years of experience and some compelling data have proven that positive transformation is possible.

Green Dot opened its first school in the fall of 2000 with 140 students. The organization has since grown to serve over 8,300 students in the most impoverished areas of Los Angeles. Prior to Locke, Green Dot operated 10 schools in Los Angeles. These schools consistently outperform neighboring public schools. For example, on California State tests Green Dot's average scores are over 130 points higher than other public schools in the same district. In Green Dot schools: 80 percent of entering ninth-grade students graduate within 4 years; 76 percent of graduating seniors have been admitted to 4-year universities; and nearly all other graduates attend 2-year colleges or enter the military. In Green Dot schools graduation rates for students receiving a College Preparatory High School diploma.<sup>1</sup> We achieve this while

<sup>1</sup> California students can graduate with two types of High School Degrees: the "traditional" High School Diploma and the A-G High School Diploma, which allows students to apply for admission into the UC/CSU system. This second degree is much more rigorous and it is the min-

servicing a 99 percent minority population. In contrast, LAUSD's graduation rate is 12 percent overall and drops to 8–9 percent for African-Americans and Latinos. Our core mission is to graduate students and prepare them for college, leadership, and life.

Green Dot was not founded to replace the public school system, but to catalyze school reform. Our vision is to prove there is a more effective way to provide public education to young adults in the Los Angeles area and achieve real results. Running small successful charter schools in which low-income, high-risk youth succeed not only provides quality education for students, but influences LAUSD and other school districts in the area to adopt more effective school governing and academic strategies.

#### THE LOCKE HIGH SCHOOL TURNAROUND

The Alain Leroy Locke Senior High School was created as a response to the Watts riots of 1967 to provide students in South Los Angeles and the Watts community a safe and secure place to learn. Forty years later Locke High School earned the unenviable distinction as one of the worst performing schools in California. The school serves a 99 percent minority student population with 95 percent qualifying for free and reduced lunch.<sup>1</sup> Before the Green Dot takeover no student was offered a quality education. Here are some of Locke's statistics prior to the transformation:

- In 2004–2005, nearly 40 percent of Locke's teachers were under-credentialed.
- Ninety percent of Locke's students performed below basic, or far below basic, on California Standards Tests in both mathematics and English language arts.
- Fifty-seven percent of students failed Algebra 1A.
- Fewer than one-third of students passed the California High School Exit Exam, required for high school graduation.
- In 2007, graduation rates were only 28 percent.

With more students on the streets than in the classroom, the school culture had become one of violence and chaos. In May 2008, nearby street violence led to riots inside of Locke, which had to be quelled by the police.

In early 2007, teachers took matters into their own hands. Teachers who had left Locke to work in new flagship Green Dot Schools joined hands with the remaining Locke teachers and the Watt community to petition LAUSD for a change in school management. In July 2008, all 2,700 students at Locke began to be served by the Green Dot organization.

Known as the Locke Transformation Project, this radical restructuring was made possible through a one-of-a-kind partnership between a non-profit charter operator (Green Dot), the stakeholders of a public high school (teachers, parents, community leaders), and a school district (LAUSD). Unlike previous charter schools run by Green Dot where enrollment is controlled and students and parents sign up to enroll from across the district, at Locke High School Green Dot took responsibility for every student within the existing attendance boundary.

Before the school could reopen in the fall of 2008, Green Dot identified over 150 issues that needed to be addressed to ensure minimum operating standards. These issues ranged from hiring effective school leaders and teachers to addressing the needs of the students returning from juvenile correctional facilities. Decisions as basic as uniform colors and as complicated as gang intervention strategies all had to be made before the doors opened on July 8th for the first day of summer school.

Over the last 2 years Green Dot has made great progress transforming Locke High School by:

- Implementing a new governance structure focused on small personalized academies.
- Creating a culture of excellent education with high expectations for student success.
- Training and supporting highly effective teachers and leaders.
- Providing a safe and respectful learning environment for students and staff.

#### A NEW SCHOOL STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

Based on Green Dot's principle of small, personalized schools, Locke re-opened in the fall of 2008 as the new Locke Family of High Schools, restructured into eight small academies. Each academy has its own principal, its own set of classrooms with clear boundaries, and its own County-District-School (CDS) code for individual school accountability. All academies are college-focused; students are required to

<sup>1</sup>imum standard that high schools should be offering for college preparedness. All Green Dot Schools only offer the A–G diploma.

take the 13 courses necessary for admission to California State Universities, known as A–G classes. College readiness is a basic tenet of all Green Dot schools and Locke is no exception.

To meet the needs of diverse learners, some of Green Dot’s academies have additional interventions. The goal is for the smaller academies to meet the individual needs of all students in the larger community. For instance, there are specific academy programs for English Language Learners and students with special needs. Other academies pair college preparation with career technical education. The ACE Academy in particular is an example of one innovative school model within the Locke Family of High Schools that provides students with an opportunity to explore pathways in architecture, construction and engineering integrated with an A–G college preparatory curriculum.

The original Green Dot charter school model uses an incubation period to phase in new students. Every year, each academy takes on a new 9th grade class of 150 students. This model continues until they establish a full 9th–12th grade academy with approximately 500–600 students. Since Locke was already an established school with 2,700 students, Green Dot created two transition academies, known as Locke Launch to College Academies (LLCA’s), for the existing 10th–12th grade students. Green Dot then created five small academies using the original incubation model for all incoming 9th grade students. The LLCAs have been a challenge as teachers have had to work hard to incorporate older students into the curriculum, make up for years lost, and break entrenched habits. Green Dot has seen the most dramatic impact from the students who attended Locke before the transition. Our initial results are positive, particularly in terms of attendance and disciplinary issues. Under Green Dot, Locke’s average daily attendance rose from 77.8 percent to 89.3 percent. Additionally, 85 percent of parents surveyed said Green Dot provided a safe environment and offered better access to education than LAUSD.

#### A CULTURE OF EXCELLENT EDUCATION

Green Dot emphasizes differentiated, personalized learning based on student growth and specific benchmarks for achievement. Frequent and multiple student assessments measure growth and inform instruction. Through these assessments, teachers offer differentiated instruction to ensure all students are achieving academically. Also, Green Dot’s curriculum skills course focuses on study skills development at each grade level:

- *9th Grade Curriculum Skills:* The curriculum is focused on the individual as a student learner and community participant. Students are taught study skill strategies, test taking strategies, and communication tools to enable them to succeed academically.
- *10th Grade Curriculum Skills:* The curriculum is focused on adequately preparing students for the California High School Exit Exam. Students work with content teachers, use an online component and receive continual feedback on areas of strengths and weaknesses.
- *11th & 12th Grade Curriculum Skills:* There are three pathways for 11th graders designed to accommodate students that are on track to graduate, students who still need to pass the California exit exam (CAHSEE) and students who need intensive credit recovery assistance.

Green Dot uses data from State assessments, diagnostic assessments, e.g., Read 180, Math Diagnostic, and classroom assessments on an ongoing basis to inform instruction and student placement. Given that the majority of students entering Locke are reading at the third grade level, specific student interventions (such as Read 180 and Math Diagnostic) are necessarily built into the school day. The staff analyzes student achievement data to determine the areas of highest need and to develop specific goals and steps necessary to increase individual student achievement. Each department sets goals at the beginning of the year and determines specific steps that will be taken to achieve agreed-upon goals. For example, after reviewing State test data, the math department may set a goal to increase the number of students in the “Advanced” category in Algebra by 16 percent. The department then establishes the necessary steps each teacher will need to take in order to reach the goal. The department is responsible for determining resource allocation for each goal. Green Dot has also launched a comprehensive effort to improve writing skills, as writing is a fundamental skill needed for college success.

Student grades are reviewed each quarter to ensure that assessments are determined appropriately based on student growth and individual student needs. Assessments are designed, reviewed, and evaluated based on their accuracy in monitoring student growth. Tests are not intended as punitive measures for students but rather as guidelines for improvement.

In the first year, even with a 38 percent increase of students tested, Green Dot has been able to maintain a consistent percentage of students achieving proficiency in English and Math. Already, first year students interviewed about the changes in Locke High School stated, “The teachers care a lot more—they ask you things, like whether you’re OK, and do you understand what they taught.”<sup>2</sup> “Teachers do not ask if we are going to college; they ask us which college we will be attending.”<sup>3</sup> Seventy percent of students surveyed noted positive impressions of Locke’s discipline policy, school spirit, and access to an adult when in need of assistance. In 2007–2008, Locke reported 924 suspensions. Under Green Dot management this number shrank by 50 percent.

#### EFFECTIVE TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS

To achieve its ultimate goal of dramatically raising student achievement, Green Dot is focused on ensuring students at Locke have access to highly effective teachers and school leaders.

Green Dot’s “Administrator in Residence Program” is a cornerstone of its effort to recruit, train, and induct effective leaders. The program provides ongoing support for the aspiring leaders as they develop their philosophy of education, leadership, and other key foundational elements prior to the opening of a school. The program inducts and trains future principals and assistant principals in six key areas:

- Green Dot philosophy, core values, and education model
- Building Culture
- Instructional Leadership
- People and Resource Management
- Community Leadership
- Problem Solving

The principal training program is a 1-year fellowship program rotating through Green Dot’s highest performing schools. Over half of Locke’s new principals were identified through the residency program.

A critical component of academic success is ensuring that our teachers are well prepared. Therefore, job-embedded professional development for teachers and school site leaders is a critical component of Green Dot’s school model and program. Green Dot believes strongly in reflective practice, which occurs in an environment where there is collaboration, use of meaningful data, and thoughtful discussion regarding instruction. Each teacher receives 144 hours of professional development per year. Some specific activities include:

- *Peer Observation*: Periodic observations of a colleague to observe and debrief on best practices in the classroom.
- *PD Days*: Ten full days of professional development for school staff to plan for the year, reflect on best practices, and analyze data.
- *Weekly staff development*: A late start is provided 1 day each week in order to establish a 90-minute professional development period.
- *Intensive Teacher Support and Observations*: New and struggling teachers are pulled out of class every other month or as needed for one on one reflection and planning sessions (with administrator and or department chairs) to address their individual staff development needs. They are observed by their department chairs and provided with peer support in monthly department meetings.

Implicit in our teacher professional development efforts is a core element of the Green Dot mission: all staff must be dedicated and fully committed to providing the best education possible for all students. For this reason, Green Dot required all former Locke staff to reapply for their jobs with renewed commitment to the classrooms and a dedication to high-quality, rigorous instruction. Nearly a third of the original Locke teachers were rehired under Green Dot’s management. Refuting the notion that bold human capital initiatives cannot be accomplished within the collective bargaining framework, Green Dot’s teachers are all union certified.

#### SAFE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF

In perhaps the biggest push to raise attendance rates, increase student participation, and lower the dropout rate, Green Dot has implemented an extensive effort to change the culture of Locke High School. This effort has included several specific strategies including: a significant investment in safety and conflict management

<sup>2</sup>LA Times Editorial Staff, “Locke High School’s Progress,” *The Los Angeles Times*, December 1, 2008.

<sup>3</sup>Comment from student stakeholder feedback.

practices; extended school hours; and parental involvement and wraparound services.

Green Dot invested aggressively in improving safety in a school that was overrun by gang problems. There are numerous individuals dedicated to very visibly monitor the school at different times during the day to make sure that students feel the school is safe and not open to external influences. Some areas of the campus have been fenced in to increase security and Green Dot has developed a series of techniques to create “safe passage” to and from school. There are bus services to protect students traversing gang territory and there are security and parent volunteers posted around a 2-block perimeter from the campus. These measures have helped to eliminate fights, reduce graffiti and other forms of vandalism.

Green Dot has also put in place a comprehensive “Safe and Civil” program to help build conflict management skills for incoming freshman students, as well as for existing students. The main program starts during the summer “bridge session” to transition students from their 8th grade schools into the 9th grade Locke Academies. The program includes strategies to:

- Develop better behavior management strategies.
- Learn effective classroom management procedures.
- Implement schoolwide Positive Behavior Support and Response-to-Intervention for Behavior.

The goal of this program and others at Locke is to instill respect and responsibility in the students and for staff to improve school climate and school culture. All our staff, including non-teaching personnel, is trained to address students respectfully and on how to de-escalate potentially volatile situations. We strive to turn any issue into a “teachable moment.”

Green Dot school facilities are kept open until at least 5 p.m. daily to provide students with safe, enriching afterschool programs and to allow community groups offering quality services to use the facilities. Keeping schools open later accommodates the schedules of working families. Allowing community groups to use school facilities helps ensure that the local neighborhood takes ownership and responsibility for the school.

At Locke, the Watts Willowbrook Boys & Girls Club and the Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC) are the service providers for the afterschool programs. Students who are not achieving a satisfactory grade within a particular class or who need more support in a subject can attend tutoring, which is offered for an hour every day after school and run by a credentialed teacher. Academic programs such as SAT preparation, academic focused groups such as calculus and algebra clubs are also available afterschool.

Green Dot is committed to actively integrating parents/guardians into all aspects of their students’ education experiences. At all Green Dot schools parents are required to give at least 35 hours of service annually. A wide variety of service opportunities are available including, attending PTA meetings, volunteering to provide safe passage, taking students to museums or participating in cultural events. Education programs are provided to new parents to help them learn the best ways to support their children’s educations. Research has proven that increased parental involvement can directly affect student achievement and we believe engaging parents is key to creating a safe and healthy learning environment for everyone.

Next year Green Dot plans to open a community health and wellness center in the neighborhood. The Locke Wellness Center will address students and parent’s emotional and social needs. Specifically, the Center will provide health and vision screenings, mental health services, parenting classes, and exercise classes as needed.

While there is still a long way to go to improve the neighborhood as a whole, a protected healthy learning environment is the first step to reducing violence in the community and raising student achievement at the school. Some of the early indications of success include:

- Green Dot retained approximately 500 more students than LAUSD had the previous year (2008) at Locke<sup>4</sup>;
- Attendance increased by 12 percent;
- Parent and student surveys indicate that stakeholders feel safer and more supported;
- Suspensions involving drugs or violence have shrunk from 21 percent of all suspensions to only 5 percent; and
- Graduation rate rose by 15 percentage points.

<sup>4</sup>Data obtained by comparing number of active students in LAUSD’s student information system in 2000–2008 and Green Dot’s student information system in 2008–2009.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONGRESS

To conclude, Green Dot's efforts to turn around Locke High School have been and will continue to be successful because we learn from our environment, hone our practices, and focus on the specific needs of our students and community.

We hope that Green Dot's experience at Locke High School will be instructive to educators and policymakers striving to turn around low-performing schools. To this end, we recommend Congress reauthorize ESEA to:

- Provide local flexibility for school administrators to restructure failing schools to more effectively meet the needs of the community. This must include authority to use and implement the four elements of reform that Green Dot implemented in Locke High School (new school governance, personalized instruction, effective teachers and leaders, safe and healthy schools).
- Increase the level of student supports, including academic and nonacademic supports that meet the comprehensive needs of struggling students and accelerate the learning and achievement of all students. This may include wraparound health and wellness services and afterschool programs.
- Provide resources for appropriate, scientifically valid instructional interventions or other academic support services, specifically for reading and math. This may include extended learning time for struggling students.
- Incentivize strategies aligning academic standards, curricula, and assessments with college-readiness requirements.
- Provide funding for high-quality teacher and leader residency programs to recruit and train highly effective teachers and leaders.
- Provide high-quality job-embedded professional development for teachers and leaders. This must include built-in time to share best practices and evaluate peer performance.

Green Dot's core value is an unwavering belief in all students potential. Evidenced by our early results at Locke, students will strive to meet the expectations of their teachers and mentors—if given the chance. Although Locke still faces significant challenges, we are confident that Green Dot has already begun to transform the lives of our Locke students and the community we serve.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Petruzzi. Thank you again, all, for excellent testimonies both verbal and written.

We will start a round of 5-minute questions. I am told that, Mr. Klein, you have to leave at 3:30. If any of you have other commitments like that, please let us know.

From my reading of your testimonies last evening and listening to you today, it is becoming clear, at least to me, that there is no one thing. There is no single silver bullet, if only we do this one thing, that will solve everything. It is a lot of different things.

One thing that keeps coming through in almost all of your testimonies, but for yours, Dr. Mitchell, is that it seems to me that you have to have more manageable school sizes. You mentioned that, Mr. Klein. Ms. Donohue, you mentioned that. Mr. Petruzzi, you mentioned that. You kind of touched on it a little bit, Dr. Balfanz.

Yet, when Andreas Schleicher, who is from the OECD, was testifying about some of his findings and research, I asked him the question about smaller sizes, and he said there was no correlation between doing well and sizes of classes. I did not ask him about sizes of the schools. I asked about class size, which kind of went against everything that I have ever thought or believed or observed, and that is, that the fewer kids you have to teach, the better they are going to learn, all other things being equal.

Elementary school teachers who are leaving after 2 or 3 years—I have talked to many of them. The ones that have 12 or 13 kids—they love it. Those that have 20 and 25 kids—they cannot stand it.

You all talk about smaller schools, but how about class size? Is that an important factor that we should consider, what is the size of the class that the teacher is teaching? Mr. Klein, is that an important factor?

Mr. KLEIN. As you said, Mr. Chairman, you have to hold all the other factors equal. The most important factor—and I am convinced of this—is the effectiveness of the teacher. I have never met a parent who would not rather have her kid in a class of 25 with a great teacher than a class of 20 with an ordinary teacher. That is why you have to control all of the variables.

The reason school size matters, certainly in a city like mine, is precisely because of the kind of things that Marco just testified to. We have lots of kids who get to high school woefully under-prepared. When those kids get to high school, if you do not have personalization, if you do not know who those children are, you do not have a faculty that is committed to them collectively like my colleagues have said, you will not succeed.

Now, I run schools in New York like Stuyvesant High School, and those schools have thousands and thousands of kids in them. So they are a very different set of challenges. What we need to do is understand that there is no uniform solution to the problem. In fact, if you can lower class size, while preserving the effectiveness and the quality of your teachers, that is a great solution.

In the course of trying to do things—for example, in New York, we have raised teachers' salaries 43 percent. We now have six, seven candidates for every vacancy in our city, and it has attracted people to want to come there. So that differential matters. Now, we could have kept the salary the same and hired more teachers, but I think we would have paid a price for that, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Which again, raises the whole issue of cost. All of these changes that are being made—New Visions, for example. How have you factored in the cost of these changes and how are these absorbed by the city of New York?

Mr. KLEIN. This is a great question for us, and obviously, Beverly will want to comment.

What we did is 2 years ago we took our \$250 million from our bureaucracy, just downsized it, and what we said to all of our schools is instead of having a mandatory bureaucracy, you can have a thing called a school support organization. We created five of them internally and six of them, including New Visions, partnered with us. The schools now pay New Visions somewhere around \$40,000 or \$50,000 a year to partner with them. Our 1,600 schools, each one of them, took that money that we returned to them from the bureaucracy and created partnerships. New Visions, City University, Fordham, and other groups, as well as internal groups that we have created.

One of the things we have got to stop thinking, Mr. Chairman, is that inside the school district or inside the school system we have the solutions. There are people like New Visions, Green Dot, and others who we want to create in New York. So I invited Green Dot to New York. I am proud to say they opened up a school with us in New York City. They are doing extraordinary work. New Visions partners with us in some 75, 80, 90 different schools, and I want to expand their role. So we have to stop thinking of this as

somehow an hermetically sealed endeavor and bring all the hands and talent. How do we fund them? I can hire the people internally or I can partner with her. I would rather partner with her.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, that raises the question of why. If it is the same amount of money, why can you not do it internally, as well as externally?

Mr. KLEIN. Because there are organizations out there like hers who have a longstanding commitment, who operate under very different rules, and who bring talent and passion to an enterprise that is largely talent-less and oftentimes passion-less.

It is not just New Visions. I have the Asia Society. I have Outward Bound. I have the College Board. I have community groups, all of them partnering with our schools. I cannot hire all of those people inside the system, but there is no reason not to partner with them.

Take these guys from Green Dot. I happen to know them quite well. What they are doing at Locke is nationally historic, and anybody who knows things about Locke High School knows this is as steep of a hill to climb as you can possibly find in public education.

Let me just finish the point. They do not want to come work for me inside the school system. They would feel that they were smothered by the rules. What they want to do is go take a school. They let me hold them accountable till their teeth hurt. Go take a school and do what they are doing at Locke High School, and if they want to do it that way, I know how to dance with people like that.

The CHAIRMAN. Very good.

Senator Enzi.

Senator ENZI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This has been extremely helpful. I see some common thread among all of the witnesses.

I am going to concentrate a little bit on the rural aspect that I mentioned to begin with and will start with Dr. Mitchell.

You mentioned the fifth option that might work as being research-based. Could you give me more information on that? You went over that pretty fast.

Mr. MITCHELL. I think in the smaller rural situations, what we are looking at is trying to take a look at some other options other than closing the schools and turnaround and transformation models that they are talking about. For example, in South Dakota right now, there is a very low-performing reservation school, and their superintendent and their staff is working very hard. So we have partnered with them, and we have done some staff exchanges and we have done some professional development together. And they are very interested in taking a look at least replicating something that another school that has had some success is doing.

I know you have mentioned that there is not a tremendous amount of real hardy research in this particular area, but it also gives us some caution as to: should we totally eliminate this from a Federal law when we are starting to see some little springs of success with this work amongst a district like myself; can we come together with other districts; can we share; and can we try to replicate some of the different things.

Dr. Reeves, with the leadership and lead institute, has the 90-90 study about turnaround schools that is giving us some informa-

tion. I mentioned a little bit about professional learning communities, which is the DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker work of Solution Tree. We are starting to see some things. When it looks into leadership turnaround in our particular region, we have seen some work from Robert Marzano and Tim Waters with the Mid-continental Educational Laboratory with school district leadership that works and school leadership that works.

So we are starting to flesh out some research here that I think could be applied if we at least would allow, in the Federal law, States to have some flexibility in these rural areas to offer the positive instead of the punitive type of accountability.

Senator ENZI. Thank you. I hope you will keep us posted on that. In fact, I want to thank all the members of the panel for being willing to do this. I do have some rather specific accounting type questions that probably Mrs. Donohue can answer the best. I would appreciate answers from all of you in your area.

Dr. Mitchell, I want to thank you for your comments about how these rural schools are rather isolated. So a lot of those options are not available. Yet, there is that same stigma on the school that creates a problem.

Dr. Balfanz, little of the Federal funding ever makes it to the high schools. As you stated in your testimony, turnaround efforts at this level are difficult and rarely successful. Are there elements that should be required by school districts if Federal funding were provided specifically to high school reform activities, or should the school districts be allowed flexibility to do what they want?

Mr. BALFANZ. I think there is a middle ground. I think that if you look at organizations that handle complexity better like the military and medicine, even business, they do two things. They invest more in applied R&D or solving problems of practice, and once they do that, they turn those into standards of practice or protocols which you are expected to use. If you do not, it is malpractice or you get court marshaled. So I think we need to think about a system where we can start learning key things that matter that are fundamentally necessary to turn these schools around and, as we do, say this becomes part of our emerging body or standards of practices.

It is behooving on you to show that you are using the standards of practice. We are not going to federally say exactly what they are, but we are going to ask you to show evidence that you are using an evidence-based standards of practice and that you have fully thought out your full challenge, that you have really analyzed what is my academic challenge, what is my engagement challenge, what is my poverty challenge, and I have a design that meets those. So that level of requirement I think is important.

I would say that we do not know enough yet to be able to say you should do this specific reform in this situation.

Senator ENZI. I appreciate that, and I appreciated the outline you gave of the different size problems that require different solutions. That was very helpful. And your phrase, "protection from turbulence," of this legislative rule, that if it is worth reacting to, it is worth overreacting to, and I am sure that provides a lot of turbulence.

If I could get a quick answer on this one, that will be my final question. I am almost out of time.

Ms. Donohue, Mr. Klein mentioned that you can operate under some different rules and regulations, so you are not smothered by the rules. What kind of rules would those be?

Ms. DONOHUE. As a nonprofit, we are not bound by the rules around hiring and other issues that a school system would face working in the public sector. So we look for the people who work with us. We work with retirees who have been educators who are available on a part-time basis. We find talent where we can. And I think it is the human talent, the commitment that people have and the flexibility that we can give them around their work that attracts them to continue to work with us.

Senator ENZI. Thank you. My time is up. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Enzi.

I just might ask—I know Chancellor Klein has to leave at 3:30—does anyone have any specific questions for Chancellor Klein before he has to leave? I would be willing to recognize anyone who has a specific question.

Senator FRANKEN. I have just one more question.

The CHAIRMAN. Just for Chancellor Klein.

Senator FRANKEN. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. OK.

Senator FRANKEN. Well, this is a short one, I think.

You stopped social promotion in New York. Right? So I think this is really probably an obvious answer to a simple question. If you stopped social promotion, why do kids in higher grades still have these gaps?

Mr. KLEIN. The answer is because it has not been in effect long enough. So as the system works its way through, we started at the third grade, but over time, they will not have the gaps.

The second reason is even as we stop social promotion, increasingly we are raising standards because we are finding that our students need to be really college-ready, not just simply high school graduates.

Senator FRANKEN. I knew it would be a simple matter.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Alexander.

#### SENATOR ALEXANDER

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Klein, your comment says powerful interest groups continually advocate for the status quo, and our Blueprint that we are working on says we would basically be giving you, for example, four choices about how to turn around schools.

My question is why should we be telling you how to do it? You know more about how to do it than we do. You are on the spot. You have been doing it. Why would it not be better for us, if we are just going to—and for a former Governor, this is a very strange thing to say. Why would we not just empower you to do it by overriding all the union rules, local rules, Federal rules, and State rules that keep you from doing what you need to do in these failing schools?

Mr. KLEIN. Well, if you can get a majority for that, then I think we should move toward that.

I think fundamentally the answer to your question is if you hold cities and States and school districts accountable for results and make sure that Federal funding follows those results, then I think you will get what you want.

It is very hard to close down schools. It is very hard to change in a dramatic way the way a school operates. The kind of thing that you see with Green Dot is very rare in America.

So I believe that the Federal Government can take a leadership role, and that is why I think Secretary Duncan basically learning from his experience in Chicago—that if the Federal Government puts its finger on the scale here and says these are the fundamental models and then holds you accountable, it helps you get done some of the tough political work locally. As far as I am concerned, I think that's a positive thing. If this committee or the country were prepared to go further in empowering us, I am all for it, as long as it is tied to rigorous accountability and performance. I think for too long Federal moneys flowed without real accountability in the system, and I think when you do not have accountability, you do not get a good return on your investment.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Dodd, you are next.

Senator DODD. Joel, let me follow up on Lamar's question because it is a good question. As a chancellor of a system-wide program, who should make that decision within your system about which turnaround model may work best? Put aside for a second whether or not you are limited by what we decide in a bill here. Should that be a decision you make? Should the school district make it? Should the individual school decide? How does that really work? If we are going to get down to the point where that school and people in it really have a better understanding, know the families, know the whole culture of that community, are they in a better position to make that choice, or should it be made at the—

Mr. KLEIN. My preference is to make it at the district level because I think we are accountable to the entire community. So basically it is very hard.

I want to be brutally candid. I have known you a long time. Closing down schools is very tough stuff and there is enormous pushback. I can see from the corner of my eye Senator Bennet smiling because he and I have had this discussion. He had to do a little of it. People have a deep attachment to a school, and the people who are there at the time, obviously, are very emotionally affected, both the faculty and students.

However, I am convinced—and I have now seen it, and I will give an example in Bushwick, but there are many others, Avanda Child where my mother went to school; Morris High School where my father went to school. These places were broken. Now, the people who were there worked hard, but they did not succeed. Sometimes you need to be—similar to being accountable for running a school district, you need to do the tough medicine.

That is why I think Secretary Duncan proposed what he did, because I think he saw it firsthand in Chicago. What you are likely to see, which is understandable, the people who are unhappy about it will push back naturally.

I have often said to people in a private conversation, would you send your own child to that school? No.

Senator DODD. I understand that and I am not disagreeing with your point except in a lot of cases, we often wonder what the options are. I think people are under this illusion that there is a nice little St. Aloysius around the corner where everyone is going to go to school because PS150 closed down. There is not a little St. Aloysius around the corner. It is not just the attachment to the school that closes. It is what are the options for that family and that child. That has got to be as large a preoccupation as the choice of losing the old famous neighborhood school.

Mr. KLEIN. Absolutely, but in every one of these instances—we have closed down some 90 schools and opened up some 400 schools, about 20 percent of them charter schools, the rest public schools. We work with New Visions. We work with College Board. So if you shut down a 2,000-person school and as you are phasing it out, you put in 400- or 500-kid schools, you theme those schools. You give them a real partner. You get New Visions. Then you create the options. All of our data show that we are getting 10-, 12-, 15-point better graduation rates as a result of that. But you are right. You cannot just shut it down if you do not have an alternative.

Senator DODD. Too often that is what it comes across as. If Jack Reed were sitting here—and he may show up at any minute. He went through a dreadful experience where, again, just the cursory information-sharing with people about what was likely to happen or going to happen caused as much of a problem as the fact they were closing down the school. How it is handled can have a huge impact.

Mr. KLEIN. Absolutely.

Senator DODD. Joel, good to see you. I do not know if anybody else has any questions, but Joel, I will defer for a minute. Michael or anybody else, do you want to raise anything? No?

Nice to see you again.

Mr. KLEIN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity.

Senator DODD. Let me jump in on this question, if I can, just to finish up on my line. I guess all of us have this experience. I come from a family of educators, of public school teachers. My father's three sisters taught for 40 years a piece in three separate public schools in Connecticut. My sister just finished 41 years, the last 20 of which were in the inner city of Hartford as an early childhood development teacher. Forty-one years was enough anyway. I was just saying to Tom, the chairman, that she began to see just the job of being a teacher, taking on so many different roles. It was just overwhelming. These kids showing up—these were early childhood programs in public schools—with so many problems, just staggering the number of problems they were walking into that school with them, way beyond her capacity as a teacher to deal with all of them, as well as be an educator.

I was just curious. In looking at these issues—anyone who wants to respond to this, but Mr. Petruzzi, let me start with you since you are a large school district, obviously, in Los Angeles. How do you deal with this? Did you have after-school programs? Are there support staff for teachers? What are the pieces? It is not just a teacher, obviously. That's critically important. What Mr. Mitchell said I so identify with. It is not just a question of how teachers teach, but teachers have an obligation to learn how children learn, and too often it is more focused on teachers' teaching capacity than understanding how each child learns, and it is different. The capacity to learn is so affected by so many outside influences before that class day begins, and to what extent do you involve these external elements in helping you turn that school around?

Mr. PETRUZZI. Yes. The level of issues of the population we had, probably about 20 percent of our kids in foster care, we have drug issues, gang-related issues. I think 25 percent of our kids have post-traumatic stress syndrome. It is amazing what they face. I think 20 percent of our kids do not have eyeglasses and they cannot see the blackboard, but they have never had a vision check. Forty percent of our kids have cavities and they have never been to a dentist. They are overwhelming issues. We have been working with partnership groups, and we brought free dental and vision care to the schools through other nonprofits because you cannot teach a kid who is in pain.

We are trying to build with the district a health facility right next door that can serve the entire school community and also teach around pregnancy and gang-related issues. We brought in a team of mental health care workers.

When you were asking before about the cost of doing these turn-arounds, these costs are real. We have spent a lot of money that is beyond the poor, little money that we get from California at this stage of the game. We had to raise and fundraise a lot of money for those issues because as we looked at the problem, it was so beyond just effective teachers, as you pointed out. And it is important that those funds are available for this.

We also have to build two new buildings for this because when we looked at the capacity in terms of classrooms—would that capacity work with 40 kids per class and a 60 percent dropout rate? It does not work with 25 kids in a class and less than 10 percent—20 percent retention. So we have to build two new buildings. So when you look at the factors that affect the cost of these turn-arounds, they are very specific to the area, very specific to the conditions, and frankly, the issues around what the students need just to get them in class and be able to be in a learning environment where they are not worried about other things are very important.

Senator DODD. If someone else wants to comment.

Mr. MITCHELL. Yes. We see a lot of discrepancy of what comes in as our product. In kindergarten, you have those that have had a couple of years of parent-supported preschool. You have those that have had Head Start, and then you have some that have had no formal kind of preschool training. They just show up at your door in kindergarten, and what are you going to do?

One of the things that I talk a lot about is—think about this. It is the first day of school. You take your kindergarten class down

to the gym. You tell them, I want you to run from one end of the gym to other end of the gym. One rule: you run as fast as you can but you all have to get there at the same time. A kindergartner will raise their hand and wonder what you are talking about. Sometimes you have to get that engrained into your teachers that there is that aspect of what their product is, and there are differentiated instructional things that we can do to try to approach that.

But certainly as part of that, we have to find time within the day and outside of the day, and we have used a lot of resources that we thank you for, stimulus resources, a 21st Century Learning Communities grant. So we do have a before-school program. We have an after-school program. We have a Saturday school program. We have a summer school program. So we are doing lots of different things because not everybody can learn at the same time based upon we do not have all the same product.

As soon as I gave that analogy to my teachers in our district, we started to understand at a higher level what we needed to do.

It is very important that we put the resources capable for turn-arounds, that they have the opportunities to do some different sorts of things that allow for that extended learning time because not everybody learns in the same amount of time.

Mr. BALFANZ. Just really quick. I think a point I would add is, we really have to think strategically how we can create the second shift of adults to help teachers which begins with parents but it needs to extend beyond them. I think there are ways to leverage existing Federal investments, things like the Serve America Act and National Service Volunteers from groups like Experience Corps, which brings retired folks in, the City Year, which brings in young adults, also college work study students. And then national nonprofits really develop their ability to give high-quality students support, groups like Communities and Schools and the Boys and Girls Clubs have actually all recently rebuilt themselves to focus on keeping kids in school and on track. We need to integrate those efforts into school turnaround efforts. We are providing the schools with a second shift of adults. So every student can get these range of services and supports. So it is not just all on a teacher.

If you ask a high school teacher traditionally scheduled—you have 125 kids you share with no one. There is no way you can give additional support beyond a handful of kids, which leads to triage, which leads to burnout, which leads to frustration. So we really have to create ways that we have empowered teacher team with a second shift of adults helping them.

Senator DODD. A great concept.

Thanks, Tom.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Dodd.

Senator Alexander.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Petruzzi, I would like to go back to the question that I asked to get a little perspective on it. In 1991—this whole question about how to help schools is not so new. The first President Bush came up with the idea of new American schools. Charter schools were just getting started, a lot of excitement about it. David Kearns. I helped him raise \$50 million, and we talked about new models for

new American schools, start-from-scratch schools. Albert Shanker said if you can have a master—well, he supported the idea. Design teams. There was the idea of \$1 million of startup money, recognizing extra money is needed for a startup, and flexibility. Now, that was not sustained.

The question I am coming to for you is, I support the Secretary's notion that we really ought to focus on the 5 percent of schools that are the worst. We all, from our own experience, know that even in the areas where those schools are, there are some enormously successful schools. We have failing schools in Memphis. Yet, there is a math and science charter school there where the ninth graders are taking AP biology. And we all have these stories about what people are able to do in their own communities.

My question is, what can we do here to help you succeed there? My bias over the years is not by telling you what to do but by empowering you to do it. As Governor, I did not know many people in the State Department of Education who could be of any help at all in helping Memphis turn around a failing school. As Education Secretary, I did not know many people in the U.S. Department of Education who could go help you do anything much about Locke School, and I do not think even our staff, as smart as they are, or we, as smart as we think we are, could do much to help you—

[Laughter.]

Senator ALEXANDER [continuing]. Turn around Locke School by saying here are four things we have thought of, now pick one of them.

It looks to me like the most important thing we could do is, if we want to be really radical, just override the union rules, override the local rules, override the State rules, override the Federal rules, and hand it to you with some bit of accountability and say, "take it and report to us and we hope you succeed."

Now that, as Mr. Klein said, may be fanciful to think of, but is that not the real problem? Do you not run into too many rules, too many regulations from all directions, too many interest groups who are in your way and keeping you from doing the things you need to do to help succeed? If that is or if that is not, what can we do to help you and others succeed in your own school districts rather than say here are four ways to turn around Locke School, pick one of them, and we will watch and make sure that you follow the ideas that we have come up with?

Mr. PETRUZZI. First of all, I would say the fatal flaw, in my opinion, of No Child Left Behind was this loophole around failing schools. In California, it got translated as that a failing school, after 5 years, you either close it down, reconstitute it, turn it into a charter or other. Ninety-nine percent of schools chose other, which was a plan that gave them a check, and they just continued to fail forever. And that was it. There was no teeth to No Child Left Behind. The one thing that I think this committee can do is to actually put teeth on accountability. You only get to fail for so many years, and then it is over.

Senator ALEXANDER. What happens when it is over? What are the teeth?

Mr. PETRUZZI. Well, the teeth is you need to do one of those things. I agree with you. At that point, you need to close that entity

and start a new one whether that is with a charter or—I actually do not think charters have the capacity to take on 5,000 schools anyway. I think we should be part of the solution. I do not see why not. You need to throw the kitchen sink at this. I also do not think we have the capacity to do 5,000 turnarounds in a short period of time. I think those schools that are closed and restarted need to start with a level of flexibility around budget allocation, money, people they hire, how they hire. We have got to abolish seniority rules around that. So it needs to be—

Senator ALEXANDER. So the teeth would be you would require closing the school, period, by a Federal law.

Mr. PETRUZZI. Or a reconstitution or some way of starting over that allows you full flexibility of rethinking that school. I think we need to put an end to failure at a certain point.

Senator ALEXANDER. Flexibility means freedom from union rules, freedom from local rules, freedom from State rules, freedom from Federal rules, and sometimes freedom from court orders. Is that the kind of flexibility you mean?

Mr. PETRUZZI. We are unionized.

Senator ALEXANDER. Well, I am not—

Mr. PETRUZZI. No. I am just pointing out that it is not just about—it is about good union rules.

Senator ALEXANDER. State, union, Federal, local—

Mr. PETRUZZI. That is correct. For example, budget flexibility is No. 1 on my list. Right now there are so many categoricals that kill schools, schools that cannot spend money on this, but they have \$1 million for uniforms.

Senator ALEXANDER. My time is up. Would you think about that and send to us exactly what you think the teeth should be?

Mr. PETRUZZI. I have sent it to Secretary Duncan, and I will send it to you.

Senator ALEXANDER. I would appreciate it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Murray.

#### SENATOR MURRAY

Senator MURRAY. Mr. Chairman, thank you so very much, and to all of our panelists today, it has been very interesting.

Dr. Mitchell, I wanted to single you out personally because I wanted you to share your experience as a rural district superintendent. I know that the rural districts in my home State of Washington are facing some serious barriers when they have to turn around lowest-performing schools. At the same time, we know that in many schools where student achievement has not improved for some amount of time, major changes in instruction are needed and tough decisions have to be made.

There is not just one right way to do this, and I wanted you to talk to us a little bit about what some of the options are in rural districts and what some of the challenges are that you have.

Mr. MITCHELL. As I talked earlier about some of those challenges, one of the things that I firmly believe in—and I did some research in South Dakota. For South Dakota, we found very specifically that those school districts that were able to have the resources and had prioritized building the capacity of their own orga-

nization and had done that in an aligned and focused way, which looked at the three things that I talked about, focusing on instruction, collaboration, being governed by results, in every case those were the districts in rural areas that were being very successful. So we have tried to—at least in the central part of the United States, we have talked a lot about that.

As I mentioned earlier, we are trying to share with other districts our story about—I want to be very careful because sometimes a lot of people come in and say, “well, could you give me a copy of your school improvement plan?” It is like, well, our plan worked for us because of the specifics of our particular unique situation. So in that unique situation because of the population that we serve, we went out and we basically looked at specific strategies that we needed to be in that had a research base to them and then also took a look at our curriculum to make sure that we were aligned and focused in the right directions, to make sure that when students went from one grade to the next grade, they knew what they were supposed to do.

As we said, before we started building capacity of the organization, we had to start making a “stop doing” list. In public schools, we do not do that. As part of the improvement process, you have to take a look very drastically at things that you are doing in the organization to stop doing that.

So there certainly is a struggle in rural America, because of the isolation, to build capacity and to build the networks, and that is what we are working on at this particular time because if we can share stories and we can share research and we can work with one another, that is our only option. When we are talking about South Dakota, if you have a rural school of 200 students and it is the only school in a 100-mile radius of anybody, there has got to be some way that we could provide some sort of positive—

Senator MURRAY. You cannot exactly fire all your teachers.

Mr. MITCHELL. Yes, absolutely. It would be disastrous and no one would go there. So we have to be careful about making sure that in those particular situations, is there an option that is positive, that builds the capacity of organizations that we have found in rural schools—there is some research that we are starting to flesh out—is very successful in helping to build the capacity and make that organization be more successful.

Senator MURRAY. OK, thank you.

I wanted to ask anybody who wanted to comment about our low-performing high schools. I think we all know our kids need a strong high school degree to get a job in today's job market. I think that an important part of preparing a student in high school that has been neglected is giving students a chance to really experience what it is like in some of the career fields and the career pathways programs that help them connect actually what they are doing in the classroom to something real when they get out.

Can any of you comment in your experience what role career pathways have played in your success?

Mr. BALFANZ. Sure. Actually in our Talent Development model—it is actually called Talent Development High Schools with Career Academies. The way we reorganized the high schools, we created a ninth grade academy to have a high intensity introduction to

high school where we give you lots of supports and personalization. Then in the ninth grade, we have a class called Freshman Seminar where part of that is career awareness, and you actually do a personality inventory. Do you like working with people, data, things? What interests you? And from that, we ask you then to select one of two or three or four upper-grade career academies which are broad themes. It is not narrow vocational, but it is like engineering or—

Senator MURRAY. Health care.

Mr. BALFANZ [continuing]. Health care or public service. The whole theory and the truth is the kids make a choice. I feel an affiliation to that. I am choosing my upper-grade experience. Those academies then market to the kids. Come to the public service academy. Help change the world. Within those academies, then they take three linked career electives, to tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade. So they actually get a coherent exploration. It is not just scattershot.

The actual evidence shows the kids that do best are kids that graduate high school with a college preparatory curriculum and a CTE concentration. Those are the kids that actually have the absolute best outcomes. Only about 5 percent of our students nationwide have that combination. So I think it is a very—for both engaging kids but also—

Senator MURRAY. Do you engage with your business community about the careers that they need?

Mr. BALFANZ. Yes, right. You have to establish business partners, a council. You come in. You look at local labor markets. All those things are sort of factored in.

Senator MURRAY. Anybody else want to comment on that?

Mr. PETRUZZI. At Locke, we have experimented with this over time with just a mild flavor of the career thing, and at Locke right now, one of our academies is an ACE academy, architecture, construction, and engineering. It is a full career tech and college prep academy where algebra I is taught with an emphasis on architectural issues and construction issues and engineering issues, the same for geometry. You are actually building a house from designing it and building it.

Senator MURRAY. Are you seeing academic success?

Mr. PETRUZZI. It is too early to say. We just started it. We really definitely see the engagement of the kids and frankly also our teachers in that model. We will get back to you in 2 or 3 years. We hope that we are very successful with that.

Senator MURRAY. Ms. Donohue.

Ms. DONOHUE. Yes. The last four schools that we have created have been CTE schools in an effort to revitalize the CTE model for high schools, and they are in somewhat nontraditional areas such as advertising and media, careers in TV and film, medical careers, and so forth. The notion is that each such school will have industry council representation, internships for students, and move students to a clear understanding of what that particular career may offer at a variety of different entry points. So it is not just the sort of junior college aspects of having a medical career as an EMT but perhaps a nursing or doctor's degree down the road. We find that

multiple entry-point kinds of careers make very good themes for schools.

Senator MURRAY. Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Isakson.

SENATOR ISAKSON

Senator ISAKSON. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much for this. This has been a terrific panel and everybody has been great. I really want to focus on Dr. Mitchell and Mr. Petruzzi for a second.

I am sitting here just marveling at the consistency between your responses coming from two totally different environments: No. 1, a heavily populated population; No. 2, a very rural population. If I listened right and heard right, the magic word of both of you was "flexibility." When you gave the answer, "well, it worked for us," meaning it might not work for you, what we did in Chamberlain, and then what you did with the academies by taking a big school and making it a small school within the confines of the same environment you were in, I think is a real testimony to one of the things we need to look to.

I know Senator Harkin and Senator Enzi and I were all on the conference committee on No Child Left Behind. When you were talking about the fatal flaw, Mr. Petruzzi, which was that it had no teeth in the end, a lot of the reason it did not have any teeth is we could not have passed it with teeth. By that I mean, there was a lot of pressure toward giving too much flexibility.

You talked about the two keys being flexibility in budgeting and flexibility in hiring, and I would echo that. When I was chairman of the State Board of Education in Georgia, we gave flexibility to the systems that were our top systems. We gave them flexibility on State spending. Those that were not our best systems—we did not give them any flexibility, which was backwards from what both of your testimony really has been.

I did want to ask one question about a special interest I have, and that is special education and special needs children. What is your experience with the disaggregation of special needs children and meeting AYP in Los Angeles in your charter schools?

Mr. PETRUZZI. We are full inclusion. So we serve an entire needs from mild and moderate severity to high severity issues. So we have a huge number of special needs kids. It is very expensive and it is very difficult, but it is a must-have in those districts.

I think right now those students in LAUSD, in my opinion, are being over-identified. What we have noticed, taking over Locke, is that probably easily 40 to 50 percent of those students had been put into too restrictive of an environment and we have shifted. They are serving them in a more classroom-integrated environment, which we think will better serve those kids over time. You tend to see that a lot in poor communities. There tends to be an over-identification in African-American males and Latino males particularly, which is sad and, frankly, actually takes away from the actual issue. Poor classroom management sometimes is translated into a special ed rating, and I think that is sad.

Senator ISAKSON. It also happens in rural systems because, Dr. Mitchell, I think you said 17 percent of Chamberlain was identified as special needs. Is that correct?

Mr. MITCHELL. Yes.

Just going back to your first comment about flexibility here quickly, the rubber is going to hit the road for me here pretty soon. I just accepted a position in Rapid City, SD, which is our second largest school district, and they have 13,000 students. One of the things they are banking on is that what I did in Chamberlain is going to work for 13,000 students. I feel very confident that it is because I've seen it also work in larger school districts than that. So the focus on instruction, collaboration, and so forth I think is something that is not limited just to rural schools.

I run a \$1.5 million special ed program with \$1 million of revenue. A very difficult issue for us. In No Child Left Behind, we used to identify some students as what we call triple threats. They are economically disadvantaged. They are Native American, and they are special ed. Because we see a large amount of our Native American students being over-identified.

Senator ISAKSON. They are counted three times.

Mr. MITCHELL. They are counted against me three times. So we have had to really focus on that. So they are a major part of everything that we do when it comes to providing extended learning opportunities.

We have also found that in rural communities the thing that was high priced and was not a big bang for the buck was a lot of out-of-district placements and seeing a lot of kids being farmed to special institutions. What we have done is we have tried to decide to train our people in-house, bring them back, and try to provide high-quality instruction in an inclusion area environment. That has been very successful for us. It does continue to be a certain difficult task for us in rural communities to provide what is needed for special education students to achieve what they need to achieve.

Senator ISAKSON. Is it also difficult in meeting AYP? Is that the most difficult group of all for you?

Mr. MITCHELL. I would say, yes. It is probably one of the most difficult groups, trying to make sure that—for example, right now I have a special education opening. I have had the same opening for 5 years. I cannot get an applicant. It is a very difficult position to find people that are qualified and want to do the job. So that becomes part of it and making sure you have a highly qualified teacher. Certainly those students' needs are simply severe at times and really burn out people.

Senator ISAKSON. Mr. Chairman, at the risk of taking too much time, could I get to my punch line?

Here is my punch line. You both have testified to the value of flexibility in budgeting, flexibility in hiring, flexibility in policy-making. The rigidity of the assessment model in special education appears to me to be a particular problem because there is a diversity of special needs, but with the exception of a 1 percent waiver of capability for cognitive disability, you have got to have the same paper and pencil examination for all. I have proposed for a long time that what we ought to do is let the special needs assessment

be determined by the IEP and not by a single-size-fits-all. I would like your response to that, what you think about that.

Mr. PETRUZZI. I am not an educator, and so I do not think I would actually serve the panel by offering an opinion on that. So probably I will just leave it up to you.

Mr. MITCHELL. Yes, because I have an opinion.

[Laughter.]

It is inherently unfair what we are doing to special education students right now. Everybody knows it. We go in and we have IEP meeting, and even as a superintendent when those IEP get really conflict—they want to bring me in, and I go—I really do not know what is going on here. You have a number of very caring people. You have the parents involved. You have the providers involved. You have the teachers involved. They are all working to determine what should be the adequate educational plan for that student. So why should that group not also decide what is adequate for progress for that particular student?

I would fully support based upon what we see now as failing our special education kids by holding them accountable through this type of testing situation. The flexibility is not there for us. We have some highly cognitive kids that we have to force to take standardized testing, that if you watched it happen, you would just believe it is inherently unfair. We certainly need to move forward to take a look at some other way to hold those students accountable because they can be accountable for their learning, and they want to be held accountable for their learning. We just need to look and find the appropriate method to do that.

Senator ISAKSON. Well, thank you very much to all of you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Franken.

#### SENATOR FRANKEN

Senator FRANKEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this hearing, and thank you to all the panelists.

One of the themes I have heard today, among others, is leadership, and whether it is about teaching or collaboration or results, as Dr. Mitchell kind of laid out—or Dr. Balfanz, you were kind enough to mention the school principal recruitment and training act that I have authored with Senator Hatch.

I want to ask you about principals. To what extent is—what is the role of the principal in a turnaround?

Mr. BALFANZ. It is a multifaceted role, and I think even just saying that, we put too much of the burden on them. We still have this image lots of times if we can just find the right principal, they can heroically come in and turn the school around. If they do not do it in a year, well, let us get rid of them and try somebody else. The truth is—and especially in a big middle and high school, you are talking about a staff of 100 people easily, and for one person to be able to come in to say, “I am going to mold you to my vision or the vision of the school without any help” does not work. We often put a gung-ho principal on top of a dysfunctional leadership team, and it is actually the assistant principals and the counselor and the person who schedules the high school. Those are the operators of the school day to day.

Senator FRANKEN. I see Dr. Mitchell going like, oh, I wish we had an assistant principal.

Mr. BALFANZ. Right.

[Laughter.]

I really think we need to think about, especially in the middle and high schools, developing leadership teams and having them be the leaders. They can be trained together so they have time to plan together. One mistake we make is we try to do turnaround over the summer. You are the new principal. You are going to take the school over. But the school is still running. It is actually not a very hospitable place to you right now because they think they are all going to be fired. So you are off-site and you have got to pull a team together. We need to say let us have a leadership team. Let us give them 6 months to plan and train and prep and be ready and have a design and be up and ready to go.

Senator FRANKEN. Mr. Petruzzi, in Blue Dot—I am sorry. What is the name?

Mr. PETRUZZI. Green Dot.

Senator FRANKEN. Green Dot. Blue, green.

[Laughter.]

Anyway, you do a residential thing where basically a principal is with a mentor for a year. Is that correct?

Mr. PETRUZZI. Well, we have a principal residency program where we train the principals on turnarounds for a year before they do it, and they spend time with people that are doing it already. So right now we are training principals based on the Locke experience, basically shadowing some of the best principals, also doing the assistant principal job for a month and a half. So they are learning the job and that is very important.

We would love to keep funding it, but we do not have the money right now because of the budget cuts in California.

Senator FRANKEN. I want to get back to money review in a second.

Dr. Mitchell, you said that in rural schools the superintendent can be the principal, the bus driver, the grant writer, teacher, and a coach and more. I was just in Finlayson, MN at the end of last week, and I had a roundtable of principals, teachers, school bus drivers, coaches who were the same person in many cases.

[Laughter.]

It really is a different deal for rural schools. You do not have the flexibility at all to fire teachers. You talk about building capacity. How do you build capacity when you really do not have the resources, when you do not have the teachers around there, when you do not have those resources?

Mr. MITCHELL. Building capacity is resource-intensive not only in dollars but in time and in lots of different things, and there are lots of ways you have got to look at doing it. But when it looks at leadership, just like I had to have a discussion with my school board the other day. I am leaving the district, what is going to happen next, well, it is not the Tim Mitchell show. It is the fact that one of the things that I learned in my career very early is you have to be a leader of leaders. So I have tried to make sure that we built the capacity of all the leaders, not just principals, but also teachers, so that there is a leadership amongst them. There are many

efforts that in our district are very successful because I finally got smart enough to quit being the dictator of the district and got groups of teachers together and put a teacher leadership team in charge of it. I just facilitated for them to do the right things that needed to be done.

I also have seen that the most important thing that I want in a principal today is someone who is good and trained in instructional leadership, and we have some stuff out of the North Dakota lead that has gone through the central part of the United States, which is good practice, to get principals so they understand and can prioritize the instruction of what they need to do.

The second thing we are looking at now is a lot of research with Marzano with school leadership that works and district leadership that works. I like that research because there are about 26 or 27 things that a principal has to do effectively, but there are only six that a superintendent has to do. So I can do those six. That is why I do not want to be a principal anymore.

[Laughter.]

Senator FRANKEN. I want to pull an Isakson and just ask one real short question of Mr. Petruzzi because I was sitting there just in awe of what you have done. I heard you talk about resources and I heard you talking about fund-raising. I know you are from Bain, and I know you know people. Right? I am thinking how scalable is this? And then you spoke to that. I just want to make sure that—because I have seen successful charter schools that have wonderful fund-raising arms.

Mr. PETRUZZI. Our model is actually to break even on public dollars after the first 4 years. The reason we needed to fundraise is we actually have to build two extra school buildings to support the student retention that we were achieving. The first 3 years, we are basically building ninth grade academies that are growing, and we have an overstaffed model in the first year to connect with the kids.

Senator FRANKEN. But you had the flexibility to do that because—

Mr. PETRUZZI. Because we fundraise. Absolutely. Not from people I know, but from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Dell Foundation.

Senator FRANKEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Franken.

Senator Murkowski.

#### SENATOR MURKOWSKI

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you. I am sorry I missed the testimony. I was at another hearing, but I did have a chance to read all of your submitted testimony, and I appreciate your advocacy. I appreciate your work in trying to understand how we can really be making a difference with some of our schools.

Mr. Mitchell, I was interested in just hearing some of the comments that you had in response to Senator Franken. We have got some very serious challenges, as you know, in the State of Alaska as we try to reach out to our students in our very, very remote and very rural communities. I would be curious. You kind of joked

about, "that is why I do not want to be a principal anymore." One of the challenges that we face in our State is we just cannot get the administrators. We are doing a little bit better with our teacher recruitment and retention, although that is a serious challenge in some areas. If all of these turnaround models really revolve around getting a new principal, what do we do in finding these new principals, particularly if they are looking at it and saying, "OK, well, I am going to be the first one on the boat out of here?" How difficult is this going to be in rural States?

Mr. MITCHELL. Well, as you probably know, it was difficult before we started this process.

Senator MURKOWSKI. True.

Mr. MITCHELL. Now you have people who can certainly check report cards and see where a school is at before they would even apply for the job. In South Dakota, we will do a national search for a superintendency of a very large school district and maybe get six people that are interested in even attempting the position. So certainly you could be creating some sort of a problem area here that is just going to get worse and worse.

I started as a superintendent when I was 35 years old. In South Dakota for a period of time, the Governor threw all the rules out and anybody could be a superintendent. So that is how I got the job. I have since went on and got my full certification and degrees to back up because I felt that was important.

The problem is trying to get the people to do that hard work and get those people to understand that even once they get those particular jobs, once they put the models in place, there is still a possibility that even though they are supporting growth, they are not going to be able to reach the bar. So they are going to force some sort of transformation which is going to send them down the road and put a blip on their record. So the recruitment and the retaining of people right now is getting to be at a very critical age, especially as many of the administrators are aging and leaving the profession.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I appreciate that.

Mr. Balfanz, you had noted in your testimony that the research is being focused primarily on the middle and high school students, when you are talking about those dropout indicators. We all recognize that there are factors that come into play that certainly are contributors, whether it is poor vocabulary development or social indicators that are out there. Should we be looking earlier? If so, how early?

I look at kids that get so frustrated so early on and that level of frustration never abates. If anything, it just gets worse. I think that then inhibits their ability. Are we waiting too late on this?

Mr. BALFANZ. I think the answer is we need to have a continuum of supports at all the key transitions, and the first key—

Senator MURKOWSKI. What are the key transitions?

Mr. BALFANZ. The first key transition is pre-K to second grade. It's really that good start. Two things, basically learning the basic reading skills and also math. The math gap is the smallest in kindergarten and gets bigger over time. So staying on top of that, making sure it does not grow.

Also socializing kids into the joy of schooling. You need to learn early on that schooling is joyful. If you socialize them it is a chore, there is so much tension, we have all got to pass our tests, that builds over time.

The next key transition is in the middle schools. To focus on any one time is not enough because there are kids that do really well in elementary school, but in early adolescence, they are making an independent decision—is schooling for me again—and their relationship to their peers is changing, to their neighborhood is changing, to their school is changing. You can have a great elementary experience and still get tripped up.

Then the transition into high school, the same thing. Twenty-five percent of kids that struggle in the ninth grade get by in eighth grade. They had good test scores. They came to school every day. They would be on nobody's radar screen, but for them it was that older transition.

And finally, we have got to have a transition out of high school. We have got to have pathways to post-secondary success because, again, we have learned how kids succeed in high-needs places. We put tons of structures in high school, three levels of extra help, and that is necessary. That does not mean you are prepared for a community college where suddenly you have got to figure out everything yourself and there is no support.

So I think it is really at those four points that we need those.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Is any one more important than the other, would you say?

Mr. BALFANZ. I do not think so. I think that is where we get into trouble. We want to pick and choose. If you make all those four transitions, you are good to go. You miss one of them. You are not.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I am not sure that we are focused on the initial one yet, the pre-K to 2.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Bennet.

#### SENATOR BENNET

Senator BENNET. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for holding this hearing and thank you for your testimony. It has been fascinating.

On the flexibility question we were talking about earlier, I think maybe one way to think about that is there is a difference between giving people the flexibility to do something and giving people the flexibility to do nothing, which has been the outcome in too many places I think.

Having said that, I would say the most turbulent thing I ever did when I was superintendent of schools was close schools and turn around schools. I learned a lot of lessons the hard way probably and learned how to do it better, but there are always ways of doing it better.

I think one of the things that keeps people from doing this work is that turbulence. The problem with that is that kids end up in institutions where they are not learning anything year after year after year, and they just fall farther and farther behind.

I know New Visions has done a lot of work in this area, and I wonder if you would share a little bit about what you have learned

over the years about how to diminish the level of turbulence that this kind of change comes with.

And then the other panelists maybe—also, what the reaction of kids actually is, which is often forgotten, when they see the new versus the old.

Ms. DONOHUE. It is a very great question. I think what we have tried to do, positioned as a nonprofit with lots of connections into neighborhood groups across the city, is to work very closely with the community to help them understand what the choices are, to help them understand why things are happening, what options are out there for individual students to, as we started new schools in new neighborhoods, bus parents to see small schools that were functioning well so they could view and understand and have a vision of what it was that we were talking about, and to create an atmosphere where that dialogue had a place in the community and in and among the parents that were going to be impacted. I think that was a hugely important thing, and it is something that you need to—if you are engaged in turnaround work—do is spend a lot more time on than many districts actually think.

Senator BENNET. This may be an unfair question to ask you instead of the Chancellor, but do you have a sense that demand for the new is beginning to replace defense of the old? Are you seeing that tip at all in New York or Baltimore or Los Angeles?

Ms. DONOHUE. I think the small schools that were created by New Visions and a number of other nonprofit intermediaries are, in the main, heavily oversubscribed. The choice process that students in New York go through to select a high school is one of computer matches, and we see that the number of students who are actually positively desirous of getting into these schools vastly exceeds the number of seats that we have. That does not help a situation where a parent in a school that is being closed—and as the Chancellor mentioned, the philosophy of closure in New York is gradual. You simply stop taking students in and you serve, as best you can, the students who are there—usually with extra and additional resources to help blunt the sense of have and have-not. But for a parent whose student is in one of those closing schools, it is still very traumatic, and there is really, I think, no way to sugar-coat that.

Mr. BALFANZ. Baltimore is an interesting example because it is one of the few places, I think, where this is finally getting to scale. I think this year there are more high school kids in new schools or schools that were started in the past decade or so than are in schools that have been around for a long time. What is happening is that people are now voting with their feet and you can see the enrollments going down in the schools that were historically there and sort of going up in the newer starts or the restarts. So I think you do see that tide turning when the sense is that there are enough good spaces for a lot of people. It is not just a few.

From the kids' point of view, no one understands better that the school is going nowhere than the kids, and they react accordingly. If they see that they are getting teachers that are struggling to teach and people are roaming the hallways, they get a sense, not much is going on. I can miss a few days and nothing is going to happen, whereas the reason you can sometimes get dramatic turn-

around results is because the kids will respond to the improved environment and they will come. They will put forth effort because they see that it is now an engaging place to be that is organized, it is going somewhere. So I think keeping the kids' point of view is important because they can vote with their feet and with their effort.

Senator BENNET. Did you have anything on this, Mr. Petruzzi?

Mr. PETRUZZI. I was going to say you cannot under-communicate this with the students and the community. You have to engage them really early on, particularly in that turnaround situation. I think most kids actually recognize that. They had been told that they were not college material, and we had to actually take them to some of our schools to show them that. Then we let them own a lot of decisions. For example, we insisted on uniforms. So that was the number one student cry. They did not want to wear uniforms. So the student body actually did a fashion show with uniforms. That kind of broke, a little bit, the ice around uniforms. Ninety-eight percent of students showed up with uniforms the first day.

Senator BENNET. I had a principal say to me once that they had a rule about no gum chewing, and he would catch kids every now and then chewing gum. He said, "do I really care? Am I really worried about it?" And he said, "no, but the fact that they are worrying about actually following the rule is important stuff."

I just had one last question for Mr. Mitchell, if I might. Mr. Superintendent, I used to hate when people asked me these questions, but—

[Laughter.]

Senator BENNET [continuing]. On the human capital question that you were raising at the end about finding administrators, finding teachers in rural areas, we face this in my State of Colorado as well. If you could wave a magic wand, what would you change that you think might have an impact on your ability to be able to fill these positions that you were talking about?

Mr. MITCHELL. I think sometimes inadvertently we do a tremendous disservice to our profession. My wife is a teacher. She is a great teacher, but with her experience over the last 28 years, the thing she told her three daughters was go get a degree and do something other than teaching because of the frustrations.

Right now one of the things that I just saw in some latest research is that what teachers want most is supportive leadership. So if we could put supportive leadership in there and then leaders like myself who go out and tell people and champion it is great to be a superintendent of schools, yes, it is hard work. It is great to be a principal. There is a calling here. It is something you can be passionate about. I think sometimes we do our own profession a disservice by talking that way and not being good role models for students that we could ignite that passion in if we really put our minds to it.

Senator BENNET. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Hagan, Senator Reed, and then Senator Murray. I am sorry. Senator Reed has to leave.

Senator REED. I am going to thank Senator Hagan for her gracious hospitality. This is payback for not leaving you in Afghanistan.

[Laughter.]

Mr. Balfanz, there is a lot of discussion around the different turnaround models. From your sense, what kind of empirical evidence do we have for any one of these models? It might be a function of just—we have not tried them a lot, but can you give us sort of a perspective?

Mr. BALFANZ. Yes. I think the honest answer is right now we have mixed evidence. You can point to successes and failures for every one of those models. In truth, maybe we have not done them in 200 places, enough to know how that average breaks out. So on average, will it be generally successful or not?

I really think that gets back to what I said, about the idea that we really need to analyze each school's challenges and get a design that fits that. In some places it is a capacity challenge and you do need fresh capacity, but in other places, it is just simply they have not been exposed to the right know-how to know what is a good program for kids that are 2 years behind in reading. That is the key part of the answer.

Senator REED. I wonder, from your perspective—and I will ask your colleagues—do we have an ongoing research plan to try to validate these models rather than having three items on the menu, pick one, it is your choice?

Mr. Balfanz.

Mr. BALFANZ. Yes. I do not think there is need, if this is going to be the big investment strategy, to have that. Part of the challenge is that it is big-scale research, and how do you know, if you are doing eight things as part of the change, which parts matter? It is a big-scale project to study that well.

Senator REED. Ms. Donohue or Superintendent or would anyone like to comment?

Mr. PETRUZZI. We have a lot of people studying us. I think the beauty about the Locke High School is that we basically took over an entire tenants area. There was a before and an after that were clearly mapable. The community has not changed. Actually, if anything, with this second great depression, it has actually gotten tougher. There are tougher issues than before. So I think we will likely have really good evidence by external evaluators in the next 2 or 3 years that will validate all this.

Senator REED. But in the interim, we are really pushing schools very hard to pick one and do it. A lot of it is just kind of gut rather than empirical evidence.

Another aspect of this issue—and it came up in the context of the “Race to the Top”—of picking out a percentage of teachers' evaluation based on the performance of students. I think we all understand that outcomes are important. You can have the best intentions in the world, but if the class is not performing, we have got to make changes.

There is also a consequence, again, Mr. Balfanz, as people are thinking through this. The consequences in terms of gaming the classroom of the best teachers who in some cases take the children who are the most challenging saying, “wait a second. If my pay de-

depends upon getting the best grades out of the kids, I want the best kids,”—overlaying systems with seniority in which you can, in fact, choose your class, etc. Just this consequence of gaming. Has anyone thought through that?

Mr. BALFANZ. Yes. I think people are really struggling with that because we know that we do want to have some evidence that you are making an impact in your classroom that matters, but when you get down to the practicalities of how to measure it, a lot of these problems come up. At least moving to some sort of growth modeling, but even at the technical level, there are lots of problems with the growth modeling because you have to usually average it over several years to get a valid measure and then teachers are changing assignments. So how many of your teachers are you actually going to have who taught the same class for 3 years? So there are a lot of technical challenges that still need to be worked out.

Senator REED. Superintendent, you are right there, right at the point of the spear, as they say, in the military context. Your impressions about the potential—and this is sort of any human endeavor with new rules to try to play the rules and some of these rules, taking teachers—every teacher out of the school, putting new teachers in, giving them basically a year to make the grade. What does that do in terms of unintended consequences? I know this is a question that is cosmic, but any response I would appreciate.

Mr. MITCHELL. I just recently got an e-mail from back home that said the day went well, congratulations, because today is testing day. This week in Chamberlain, SD, we are doing the Dakota STEP test which is going to determine our accountability. As I mentioned, my wife is a teacher, and I have seen all the tension building as we get to this high-stakes test. Everybody understands they have worked very hard, but everything can be determined on this next couple weeks. So that is a major concern.

I also have a concern about one of the things that I really think is a key block to our success in Chamberlain, which is collaboration. If you start putting in the competitiveness of the pay program—I’ve looked at the possibility of maybe looking at some group compensation so that collaboration continues. I am sure I can find and track because we know that some of the measurements here, the metrics, are a little unreliable, not valid. I might have a great teacher this year. She might be a great teacher next year, but for some reason all of a sudden, she was not a great teacher the third year. So what happened?

Senator REED. I was in her class.

[Laughter.]

Mr. MITCHELL. Those things can happen, and what is that going to do to the system?

There is some new research out about motivation, and motivation is not always carrots and sticks. It is autonomy. It is mastery. There are some other things. For example, now as I mentioned earlier, some teachers we are talking about—the most important thing for them for staying in a school is supportive leadership, not the amount of money they are being paid.

Senator REED. I would ask—esteem, the sense of purpose, are very difficult things to define.

Thank you all very much for your testimony today and your leadership for many, many years. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Senator Hagan.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Hagan.

#### SENATOR HAGAN

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Chairman Harkin, for one, holding this hearing today and also thank you to the witnesses for your testimony. It has certainly been excellent.

I think as the committee moves forward in our efforts to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, I think it is critical that we understand and look at helping to turn around our lowest performing schools. We can no longer continue to allow chronically under-performing schools to get away with improperly serving our students. We have got to do better. As we strive to ensure that our students are career- and college-ready, I think that we can all agree that this effort is not going to be an easy one. But we can certainly agree that we can no longer afford to wait and that the time is now.

Dr. Balfanz, in your testimony, you talked about the Nation's 2,000 dropout factories, and you note that each of these dropout factory high schools are linked with one or more middle schools where at least half of the eventual dropouts begin the process of disengaging from school.

I believe that our middle school students are overlooked, and to that end, I have introduced legislation titled the Student Attendance and Success Act that acknowledges that truancy at the middle school grade level is one of the biggest indicators that students are on their way to being a high school dropout. I strongly believe that we need to do a better job at acknowledging that while our students are in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, we need to acknowledge that before it is too late.

I understand that research has demonstrated that by creating safe learning environments and better engaging parents and their communities and schools and helping students get back on track academically, that students are much more likely to succeed.

Can you share your thoughts on the contribution of problems at the middle school level that leads to the ultimate problem of dropouts?

Mr. BALFANZ. Yes. It is on two levels. One is that if students are disengaged in the middle grades, they have had 3 years of developing those bad habits. So it is that much more challenging, when they get to ninth grade, to turn it around.

And I totally agree. The chronic absenteeism in the middle grades is a vast under-acknowledged problem. Any place that has a dropout problem has an unacknowledged middle grades chronic absentee problem in general.

Then second, it is on the achievement side, and they are related. We followed the city. We found that 40 percent of the kids between the sixth grade, going 5 years out, missed a year or more of schooling. So it is not surprising. Right? If you have missed a year cumulative out of 5 years, how are you ready for high school?

The other thing that is so troubling is it is different kids on different days for the teacher. So they have a no-win situation. Either I can say let me remind you what we did yesterday and lose the kids that were there or forge ahead and lose the kids that were not. So the chronic absenteeism affects the kid but it affects the whole school which affects the amount of learning that happens.

So those things, the achievement gap and the engagement gap, in the middle grades really do present overwhelming problems when they come to high school, and that is why I really agree with the idea that it is the 6 through 14, almost, that we have to focus on, really that high school and its feeder middle schools and then pathways to college and career as a block, as well as elementary is an important block too, but that is sort of a unit.

Senator HAGAN. Have you seen successful models that solve that truancy problem in middle schools?

Mr. BALFANZ. Yes, because a lot of this is just attention to the problem. These are 12-year-olds. Right? You can work with a 12-year-old to get to school. You have a better chance than with a 16-year-old. A big part is just from the lack of attention. Then there are positive recognition programs, parental involvement programs, all sorts of tools.

Senator HAGAN. Good. Thank you.

I understand that in year 3 of a school that does not meet adequate yearly progress, those schools are required to use title I funds to help with tutoring by hiring private tutoring companies. Dr. Mitchell, talk about the quality of those private tutors.

Mr. MITCHELL. We have a real difficult time getting anybody to provide that service in the rural isolated areas. There are just no providers. I sit in the middle of a State where it is either a 2- or 3-hour drive to any of the face-to-face providers, and we have played around with and had mixed results with some of the online providers. So it has been a mixed bag for us. But technically we put more stock in our own work in our own school working with extended learning opportunities, the Saturday school, the before-school, the after-school, the summer school with our certified people, hopefully, to provide the remediation that is necessary for those students.

Senator HAGAN. I have heard mixed statements that, depending on where you are, the quality and the expertise in some of the private tutoring differs.

I know we have talked a lot about rural schools. In North Carolina, we have quite a few rural schools, and it is always a problem finding teachers who are qualified and committed. I think in many cases, Teach for America students are doing a great job. When we talk about rural areas, not only do we need teachers, we need the school psychologists, we need the school social workers. How do we structure this so that we make a great attempt at figuring out how we are going to solve this problem?

Mr. MITCHELL. It is a difficult issue to find these people. One of the things that we have tried to do is we took a look at some of the research in Chamberlain. In our building of capacity and providing the skill training and the mastery and some different things like tuition credits for the recertification, the chance to go to a national convention and network with their peers, we put all that

stuff out there. It allows us to provide—that they know they are going to come to a supportive environment that is going to build their capacity. So we have helped teachers become nationally board certified. We have used Federal resources to let them get their master's degrees. We have tried to provide all kinds of building capacity once we get them there. Getting them there is the difficult point.

But one of the things that we have done is there are two things right now that are going on that we are having some success with. There is, I think it is, a Federal grant. It is administered by our State right now. It is called Project Select. If you have a degree in anything, you can come in and you will be put with a teacher, and for the whole year, you will teach under the tutelage of a certified staff member while taking all your classes to become a certified teacher. At the end of that 1 year, you will be a certified teacher and then be able to go in the classroom. So we have been looking at that traditional route. We have three people that are in that right now.

Then the people that retain the best—we grow them locally. We have some people in our community. We are doing it now also with the Foundation for Health Care because rural health care is having the same problem. So we partnered in the same thing. It is finding those kids in our community that are interested in that, invest in them, build their capacity, and continue to make them understand that this is where their family is, this is where they have a connection. If we give you some support, will you stay in our community? We have had some success with that effort also.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you.

I had just one last question, for Mr. Petruzzi from Green Dot Schools. You said that students wear school uniforms. How did you pay for those? Did the students actually pay for those?

Mr. PETRUZZI. We bought about 1,000 extras and washing and dryer machines, so everybody who shows up without a uniform has to change and take a uniform. But yes, it is actually a much cheaper way. We actually talked to parents and kids that they should save their money for the weekend and not for buying—basically our uniforms are khaki pants, which is the cheapest type of pants that you can buy, and anything with a collar and the school colors, so black or blue or white, whatever gang-neutral colors for the school. So it is very cheap for the families.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Merkley.

#### SENATOR MERKLEY

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you all for your testimony.

I just came back from doing six town halls traveling around Oregon, rural Oregon. As I went to each community, I either talked to teachers at the town hall or held a separate meeting with educators. The concern that came up most often was that the vision for rewriting this program misses the mark in terms of its emphasis on grant applications, just rural schools saying, "I am the superintendent, I am also the principal. I am the only administrator, and I am writing some grants now," but when there is only a small

chance of getting them, I can only afford to do that once or twice. We know that if there is a limited number, we are going to be out-competed by professional grant writers and administrators, administrative teams at larger school districts. We are just going to have to give up, if you will.

They talked about an alternative model where essentially a goal is laid out. For example, maybe it is better data management of testing so that you can track a student's progress year to year. If a school wants to sign up to do it, they get formula funds to do it. They would have to lay out their plan, but it is not a question of writing grant after grant after grant and getting turned down or losing out to larger schools time after time after time.

So I just wanted, first, to share that with the committee and, second, to see if that makes sense, if anyone wants to comment on that challenge.

Mr. MITCHELL. As I mentioned in my testimony, it is a real concern for us and the competitive nature—there are a lot of grant opportunities that I know in our district we miss out on because we just do not have the capacity to apply for. We have to weigh what are we going to get out of it versus the capacity. What are we going to have to give away to do it? So it is a give or take in that particular situation.

I also agree with—I would be very supportive of the formula grant, but I want you to understand. I am all for accountability too. I do not think any formula grant should be delivering lots of money to a school that is not putting forth some results. So if we continue with formula grants, I hope we will attach the accountability with it and people will do that.

We used to have an education service agency that had a grant writer. Tough economic times. What is the first thing that the State had to cut? They provided that. The State has cut those educational service agencies, and they brought in a lot of our major grants. So now our grant writer is gone.

So it is a huge concern for us if large parts of new educational dollars are competitive in the rural situation.

Senator MERKLEY. Yes, go ahead.

Mr. BALFANZ. One thought I have is, I wonder if there is a middle ground here for some of this, which is participation in a learning network, so not just get your money, do your own thing, good luck, or compete for this, but if you get this money and you agree to do certain things, you also have to participate in the learning network of sharing what you learn. So he is doing great stuff in South Dakota, and it is really hard for that to get to rural Oregon. It just is. But if you were linked together in a learning network and there was some obligation that he is sharing what he has learned over here, as part of his grant, he has to actually help organize the technical assistance, that might create sort of a way that we can learn and not just compete or just get money and not have to do anything.

Senator MERKLEY. I will tell you my impression was that these school districts would be happy to share what their learning is, if you will, the accountability, do an evaluation afterwards, lay out a proposal in advance, but it is the notion that if only a few grants are available, we are going to get out-competed, and just feeling

like the system is not designed to help small rural schools. But I think being able to go to a Web site where other schools are reporting on their results, that is an incredibly powerful learning forum, if you will, for schools to share their strategies and their experiences. I think that is a good idea.

Dr. Mitchell, another thing I wanted to ask because of your experience in a more rural area is it seems like some of the features in the Blueprint are based on an urban school model, the turnaround strategies. The idea of firing a principal and 50 percent of the teachers—try making that work in a place where the next school is 60 minutes away. Are there strategies that make sense in an urban setting that we have to be careful to recognize that the rural setting is different?

Mr. MITCHELL. I would agree with exactly what you are saying. We are very concerned out in the rural setting when we look at the Blueprint and we look at those turnaround models and just do not see any options really viable for us.

Once again, I want to make sure you understand that there is no one out in the rural setting that does not want to be held accountable. There is no one out in the rural setting that thinks that rural schools that are persistently performing—something needs to be done. So hopefully, we are looking for some sort of option.

As we talked about earlier, maybe not all the research is there, but there is some research that is coming forward, and we do have pockets of success. One of the things that we found is performing—in my little school district, we have a learning community and that has helped build our capacity. Can we do that at the State level? Can we do that at a national level? One of the things that I found in my research was the one thing about a leader that is more successful, they have more networks. They collaborate more. They work with others. They share experiences and so forth.

We would hope that when you come down to reauthorizing ESEA and you get to the point of the turnarounds, that there is some sort of way that we are not closing the door that certain school districts that get to a certain point do not have any option that is viable for them. We need to figure out that option that still holds people accountable that does not allow persistent failure in rural schools but there is something there that allows them to reconstitute themselves and do something more than firing the principal and firing the staff and starting over because it is just not doable.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Merkley.

Well, I want to again thank the panel for all of your testimonies and for being here today, but more than that, just for your total involvement in education.

First of all, let me just say that listening to this whole thing today and as I have had more and more hearings on this—I have sat on this committee now for 22 years—it just seems that all we are talking about is fixing problems here. Why do we not try to answer the question of what is causing the problem?

It reminds me of the apocryphal story of a community that was situated on the shores of a lake. The lake had a beautiful beach and recreational facilities. One day they noticed that the beach was

filling up with all kinds of junk and refuse and things like that. So that cut down on the people visiting the beach and the lake. The city council met and they passed an ordinance and they raised the levy and raised some money to clean it all up. They cleaned it all up and made it beautiful again.

The people came back to the beach, back to the lake. A couple of years went by, a few years went by. The beach got refuse again, got dirty again. People stopped coming. So the town council met again. They raised another levy, raised the money, cleaned it all up, fixed it up. People came back again.

This happened three or four times. Finally, at one of these meetings, somebody got up and said, "where is all that stuff coming from?" And someone said, "well, you know, the lake is fed by one river." "Well, where is that stuff coming from?" "It is coming down the river." "What is up the river?"

So they went up the river and found out where all the stuff was coming from and stopped it there, prevented it from coming down.

Well, it seems to me a lot of times we do this in education. We are always patching and fixing and mending, trying to clean up a problem, and we are not quite getting to the essence of it.

In 1991, this book came out, *The Unfinished Agenda: A New Vision for Child Development and Education*. I remembered that back in the mid-1980s, about the first time I came on this committee, then-President Reagan wanted to have a study done on education, about why we were not having a better education system meeting the challenges of the future. He did not want any of the soft-headed, pointy-headed liberals and people like that and school administrators and people like you involved in all this.

He wanted the business community. He wanted the business community to do a study on education and what we needed for the future. So that was established.

Some years went by. It is now 1991. I find myself not as the chair of this committee. Senator Kennedy was, but I was chair of the appropriations subcommittee for this committee at that time. A man came to see me by the name of James Renier. He was then the President of Honeywell. He wanted to see me. Fine. I assumed he wanted to talk to me about education. He delivered this book to me. He was the chair of that committee. If you read the board list, there are people like head of Ciba-Geigy, Sun Company, Pacific Mutual, Arco Chemical, Smuckers, Northwestern Mutual, Texas Instruments. You get the idea. Right?

They did all this study over a few years' period of time. I think it lasted through the Reagan administration and into the Bush administration. So they ended their studies about 1990. They came out with their findings. And he wanted to deliver this to me. Jim Renier came in to see me.

You know what their executive summary was? The Nation must redefine education as a process that begins at birth and recognizes that the potential for learning begins even earlier and encompasses the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of children. That was their executive summary. Education begins at birth and the preparation for education begins before birth. This whole thing. This is the hard-headed business community of America that said we have to pay more attention to early childhood development.

We have to put more emphasis on early childhood learning. They went so far as to say we have to put more emphasis on maternal and child health care programs so that children are born healthy with good minds.

That is what this is all about. It is about preschool because they said by the time—as we all know, brain development during early years—that is the best time for brain development. By the time these kids get to kindergarten and first grade, they are so far behind, we are always trying to play catch-up. You are talking about middle school? They have been behind since before that.

Now, yes, you can do some things. You can change structures. You can do structural changes. You can do all kinds of things like that and you will make some progress.

But it seems to me that if we really want to get to the crux of the problem, we have to focus on early childhood education.

You are all in elementary and secondary education. That is what we are talking about, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Well, maybe we have to change the way we think about things. I challenge you to think about this. You are all thinkers. You are all brilliant and bright people. Your thinking is way above mine. But it seems to me we ought to, just maybe, think that elementary education does not start at kindergarten. Maybe we need to redefine elementary education as starting at birth, and therefore, elementary education encompasses preschool. That might change a whole different way that we look at things if we redefine that. So I ask you to consider that kind of a change.

I also ask you to consider structural changes. Society in general on a broad scope has changed immeasurably in the last 400 years. Think about that. Think about how our society and the structures and everything we do—how much it has changed in 400 years, let alone the last 50.

Yet, there seems to be one structure that has not changed in almost 400 years, the structure of the school. Think about it. You have a schoolhouse. You have a classroom. You have a teacher in front of the class. You have one teacher and you have the class. That is the instructional methodology. It has been that way forever. Is that the right structure for teaching?

Now, what am I getting at here? Some of you talked about this. And that is that—and Senator Dodd touched on it—a lot of these kids in school have a lot of problems that have nothing to do with their brain power but it has to do with their emotional well-being, what is going on at home. Mr. Balfanz, you talked about that. These kids come from homes that the safest place they have in the day is school, even one that may have been like the Locke school before you got a hold of them. They see violence. They have bad diets, bad health. Some of them are even lucky if they have a single parent around. Many of them do not even have that. They bring in a lot of baggage with them to school. They see violence, drugs, all kinds of things like that and they act that out. And they wind up being truant, absent, disciplined, and yet there is no one counseling them.

You have a teacher who has learned how to teach. They go to a teaching school. They go to school to learn how to teach. They become teachers or they come through Teach for America, or other

things like that. But they are trained to teach, to educate, hopefully to provide learning, not just teaching but learning. But they are not trained child psychologists. They do not understand child development. Oh, maybe some do a little bit, but that is not their forte. That is not why they are there. They are there to impart learning, to get kids to learn.

Well, maybe we ought to reconsider the structure of a classroom and the role of a teacher. Maybe we also need a good child development/child psychologist in that classroom to handle the emotional and other problems of these kids.

We had a project that I was involved in 20-some years ago. McDonald's Corporation put up some money. I got them some money through appropriations, a little project in which we reduced the ratio of trained child psychologists—there are people at least with a master's degree—down to about one to—and I am a little hazy here. I could be off, but maybe 100 to 200 kids.

Right now the national average is about 1 in 3,000 elementary school kids. There is about one trained child psychologist in a school system for every 3,000 kids in America. I could be off a little bit, but I do not think I am off that much.

We got it down to a couple hundred, which means we had a trained child psychologist at a school every day all day interacting with the classrooms, interacting with the teachers, interacting with the kids. They paid home visits with the kids, found out what their family situation was like, found out what their health situation was like. You were talking about that, Mr. Petruzzi, about looking at their health, getting them the kind of dental assistance they need, the kind of eyeglasses they need, things like that.

Why, in 3 years' time, teachers were amazed. The kids were not fighting anymore. They were not acting out. They were not truant. They were starting to behave and act differently.

Now, we could not continue that. That was just a little pilot program.

Why do we not do this all over America? It costs money. It costs lots of money. It costs money to do that.

But it seems to me we ought to start thinking about this structural entity of a classroom. Should it be the same way as it was for the last 300 or 400 years?

Well, those are just some of my thoughts on this. I guess as chairman I get to say those things—

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. At the end since I sat here the longest. Well, you sat here a long time too.

So I turn it over to you. Do any of you have any last things that you would like to say or impart for the record before we end the hearing? I will just open it up. Any last thing that sparked you to say, "no, you are on the wrong track. We have to do something else." Is there anything else that any of you would like to bring up? Going once—

[No response.]

If not, again, we will leave the record open for 10 days for people to submit other testimony.

I would also ask you—and I am not just pandering to you. You are really the experts. You are people who know this so much bet-

ter than those of us here. Please follow our developments here. Please follow as closely as you can what we are doing here. We are going to have more hearings on this. I do not know how many more we have. Quite a few more hearings. Then we will develop the legislation on how we go forward on this. I would invite you at any time to get a hold of our staff, to submit e-mails to us, follow up on what you saw here today. If you think we are headed in the wrong direction, let us know. If you think we are headed in the right, let us know that also. This is an ongoing process.

We will do the best job we can in trying to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. I am hopeful that we are not just going to reauthorize something that is going to be making the same mistakes we have made in the past. Surely, we have learned something about what went wrong in the past. We are trying to do something a little bit differently, not to do something different for difference's sake but to do something different where we have tested it, where we have tried things out. As you say—I think you said, Mr. Balfanz, there are all kinds of different things out there that work. Trying to find the best of those out there—

I understand the idea of flexibility. I appreciated what Senator Bennet said, that you do not want the flexibility to do nothing. You want the flexibility to move in a certain direction, but it also seems to me that there are a lot of superintendents out there, Dr. Mitchell, around the country, principals around the country that would like to do something but they do not know what to do. They are busy people. They are busy in the day. They have their communities. They have their own families. They have their own school board to deal with and parents and things like that. So what we might be able to do is to provide that kind of a menu, a smorgasbord, a menu, or something that they can draw from, but with a certain limit in there of what they might draw from to do.

I agree. I think most of you said those four items that we had in the past—that does not cut it for every school. There have to be other things in there that they can do also.

I do not mean to digress any further in getting how you measure yearly progress. If there is one thing I am convinced of, you cannot measure progress against some unattainable goal. You must measure progress from where you have been and how you grow from where you are, and that is how you measure progress, not in trying to meet some, as I think, unattainable type of a goal.

Well, that is enough from me. I thank you again very much. Again, I invite you to continue to keep in touch with us as we develop this legislation.

The committee will stand adjourned.

[Additional material follows.]

## ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

### PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH (AIR)

American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) is pleased to offer this testimony on school turnaround models. AIR® has conducted or is currently conducting major studies of school turnaround under contract to the U.S. Department of Education, including *Design Options for Turning Around Low Performing Schools* (2008), the *Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools: A Practice Guide* (2008), *Achieving Dramatic School Improvement: An Exploratory Study* (2010), *Identifying Potentially Successful Approaches to Turning Around Chronically Low Performing Schools* (ongoing since 2009), and the *Study of School Turnaround* (ongoing since 2009). These studies and related work inform the testimony below.

In the following written testimony, we provide a brief overview of the intervention models outlined in final rules for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) followed by a summary of research evidence on improving chronically low-performing schools. Our key points are the following:

1. The research base supporting each of the four intervention models is mixed. There is supporting evidence for each, and evidence about conditions that correspond to positive effects.
2. The intervention models as described are likely to include *practices* that have some support in research on school improvement. These include: changing principals, changing curriculum and instruction, providing flexibility, ensuring job-embedded professional development, providing social-emotional supports, and encouraging quick wins.
3. Turning around chronically low-performing schools is fraught with challenges that can easily undermine success, including: leadership turnover, limited district and State capacity, a lack of high-caliber teachers, and the challenges of matching the intervention practices to school needs. Case studies provide some examples of how schools have overcome these challenges.
4. The research indicates that the quality and level of implementation is critical to successful school improvement. How the practices are implemented, their coherence, and their fit with school needs may spell the difference between success and failure.

#### ARRA INTERVENTION MODELS: EVIDENCE FOR THE MODELS AND KEY COMPONENTS

Under the ARRA, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) has identified four school intervention models for chronically underperforming schools: Turnaround, Restart, Closure, and Transformation.

- **Turnaround** involves changing many core elements of the school: replacing the principal and up to 50% of teachers, changing instruction, providing job-embedded professional development, using data to inform instruction, expanding learning time, providing wraparound services, changing the governance structure, and providing additional flexibility to the school. Research on whole school reform suggests that bringing together a suite of changes to these aspects of the school can improve student learning, but the quality of the implementation and exact nature of the programs (e.g., *which* curricula, the strength of the research base, the fit with school needs) are critical.<sup>1</sup>

- **Restart** involves closing the school and reopening it under new management (an education or charter management organization), under the premise that these organizations will have the efficiency and flexibility to make important and necessary changes in the school. Anecdotal indicators suggest some success for chronically low-performing schools that reopen as *charters*.<sup>2</sup> However, most of the evidence focuses on charter schools in general, not chronically low-performing schools that have closed and reopened as charters. The evidence of charters' effects on achievement is mixed, with significant gains in some but not all cases.<sup>3</sup>

Research evidence concerning charter schools run by **Education Management Organizations, or EMOs**, (a subset of all charters) is likewise mixed. There is some evidence that schools run by EMOs have significantly higher achievement gains than non-EMO charter and public schools, but the gains are not large enough to overcome initial achievement gaps.<sup>4</sup> Some studies have found cases in which EMO-managed schools made gains, although at a slower pace than non-EMO schools.<sup>5</sup> A critical review of seven widely implemented EMOs that operate in about 350 schools found that one model had moderate evidence of positive effects on student achievement (Edison Schools), and six models either had no strong studies or no studies at all.<sup>6</sup> EMOs do seem effective at streamlining school administration, creating more effective professional development, setting and maintaining clear

standards, establishing a consistent instructional approach, improving facilities, and similar hallmarks of well-functioning schools. Note that most of the research did not look specifically at chronically low-performing schools that had closed and reopened as charters, but at EMOs more broadly.<sup>7</sup>

- **Closure** involves closing the school and sending students to other existing schools; the intent is to provide different—and better—educational experiences for the students. A recent study of closure indicated that it may improve student achievement if students end up in higher achieving schools. However, a number of implementation factors (e.g., neighborhood schools tend to be of the same low quality and transportation to higher achieving schools is difficult, turmoil around the transition can affect learning) make it difficult to consistently realize these effects.<sup>8</sup> A recent paper on how and why four major districts (Denver, Chicago, Hartford, and Pittsburgh) closed failing schools provides some suggestions on how to improve the implementation of this option.<sup>9</sup> For example, schools and districts can offer additional support during the transition such as clarifying the new principal's role, helping students and families understand and follow through on the school change, and providing staff clear information on next steps. They also should ensure that the public and school board are knowledgeable about and supportive of the effort. Critically, there needs to be a supply of higher performing school options readily available to the students.

- **Transformation** is similar to the turnaround model, but with more emphasis on keeping the existing teachers and holding them accountable for student learning through new teacher evaluation systems that used student growth as a measure of performance. The closest related research is on teacher incentive programs, which reward teachers for students' growth. The literature base on the effectiveness of teacher incentive programs is still developing. There are a limited number of rigorous studies that examine correlations and the implementation of specific programs—with mixed or positive results—but more studies are underway.<sup>10</sup>

Although the models themselves are relatively new and have limited rigorous research, the strategies that are part of the models build on earlier research. While the mechanisms may differ, all four models imply changing students' learning experiences by one or a combination of practices, including replacing staff, providing staff with more job-embedded professional development, changing curriculum and instruction, and providing more flexibility at the school level (sometimes to the principal and sometimes to the management organization). The turnaround and transformation models involve wraparound services to meet students' non-academic needs that affect their potential to learn.

- **Changing staff.** There is case study support for the approach of changing at least some staff—especially principals—to improve schools. Changing staff, especially the principal, also can send a strong message to the school and community that the school will be changing and the status quo is no longer acceptable. According to the recent IES practice guide on turning around chronically low-performing schools,<sup>11</sup> case studies of turnaround schools indicate that effective turnaround schools (e.g., schools that dramatically improve student achievement quickly) use turnaround principals. Often these are new principals, selected for leadership qualities common to turnaround leaders in education and other sectors (e.g., they thrive on challenge, they can stay focused on goals and motivate others towards those goals). Sometimes, existing principals can lead schools to turnaround, but these principals generally have turnaround-specific training and make a visible break from their previous leadership strategies. Consistently, turnaround principals become much more involved in classroom instruction, and make very public commitments to change the school and student learning.

Case studies also provide evidence that successful turnaround schools evaluate and selectively prune their instructional staff. Indeed, wholesale staff replacement is not always warranted. Successful turnaround schools tend to build a committed staff by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the existing staff vis-à-vis the schools' reform strategies; redeploying or counseling out staff who are not functioning effectively, and purposefully selecting staff with the key qualifications and a commitment to the reform effort.

- **Embedded professional development.** Decades of research supports the premise that embedded professional development is more effective at changing teachers' instruction than traditional workshops. Further, content-focused professional development may be especially effective. However, rigorous effectiveness studies have yet to prove that embedded professional development improves student achievement. Researchers suggest that it may take longer for the impact to filter down to the student level.<sup>12</sup>

- **Changing curriculum and instruction.** Descriptive research on effective schools and organizations consistently finds that instruction (including curriculum)<sup>13</sup> matters most, and other changes (e.g., leadership, resources) also relate to student achievement when they facilitate changes in instruction.<sup>14</sup> The School Turnaround Practice Guide reported that successful turnaround schools consistently focused on (1) using data to improve instruction and (2) involving teachers in aligning the curriculum to the State standards. Successful turnaround schools used data to shape and track progress towards school goals, identify needs for individualized teacher professional development, and identify needs for reteaching individual students specific content and skills. These schools also involve teachers in aligning the curriculum, which seems to help teachers in the case study schools be more reflective of their own instruction.

- **Providing more flexibility at the school level.** In their study of high poverty, high performing schools, Mass Insight found benefits to providing chronically low-performing schools with the flexibility to enact changes to improve the school.<sup>15</sup> Specifically, allowing schools more control over staffing and budget may enable them to focus human and financial resources where they are most needed.

- **Social emotional supports.** Students who attend chronically low-performing schools often have many non-academic needs that interfere with their ability to fully engage with instruction.<sup>16 17</sup> Research supports a three-tiered approach in which students at the highest levels of need receive intensive services, such as wrap-around; students who experience risk factors for school failure receive targeted services; and universal interventions are aimed at improving safety, relationships, and school climate.<sup>18 19 20</sup>

- **Quick wins.** Although not mentioned in ED's four school intervention models, one further strategy frequently emerges in the cases of successful turnaround schools: quick wins. These schools consistently make one or a very few visible improvements early in the reform process to motivate staff around the reform effort. Quick wins are very focused accomplishments within the first weeks of reform to propel the reform forward; turnaround in achievement generally requires 1 to 3 years of sustained efforts.

#### IMPLEMENTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES

Turning around chronically low-performing schools is fraught with challenges that can hinder effective implementation. Moreover, many schools have struggled to sustain high achievement levels after initial gains. Some implementation and sustainability issues that consistently appear in the research on turning around low-performing schools include the following:

- **Matching need and approach.** Case study research shows that no single intervention consistently works in every case, and that strategies that enable one school to improve may not succeed elsewhere.<sup>21</sup> In part, this may be a result of the unique challenges and context for each school. A recent study of 11 low-performing schools found that matching the approach and implementation strategy to the school is critical for success.<sup>22</sup>

- **Few high-caliber teachers.** If chronically low-performing schools are to fill their classrooms with well-qualified staff, they need to recruit and retain such teachers. However, some districts are unable to attract sufficient numbers of teachers, particularly in high-need subjects and specialties.<sup>23</sup> Thus, turnaround activities may need to be accompanied by systemic efforts to recruit and retain a more qualified teacher workforce.

- **Lack of capacity at the district or State level.** One of the underlying premises of accountability is that low-performing school lack the capacity to improve on their own, and can only do so with external support, often provided by the district or State. However, districts and States themselves face capacity challenges with regard to expertise, the number of available staff, funding, or technology, that limit the extent to which they can facilitate change efforts.<sup>24</sup>

- **Leadership turnover:** Too often, it is difficult for schools to sustain improvement efforts (and resulting gains) when leadership changes.<sup>25</sup> Unless a transition is carefully planned, the departing principal may leave a vacuum in terms of reform expertise, vision, networks, and communication skills. Similarly, substantial teacher turnover can contribute to an environment in which professional learning and staff capacity cannot grow.

- **Sustainability.** Studies of turnaround schools, as well as anecdotal evidence collected from hundreds of turnaround leaders,<sup>26</sup> consistently show challenges in maintaining and building on the early successes. The Achieving Dramatic School Improvement study found substantial "bounce" in test scores of schools that initially appeared to be turnaround successes—after years of failing to meet standards, they

might meet standards 1 year only to fail the next. Some schools lost additional funding when they met State standards, and had to abandon the extended learning time programs that had helped them raise student achievement.

In summary, turning around chronically low-performing schools and sustaining improvement strategies are difficult, but not impossible. Research provides evidence about which *practices* are evident in turnaround schools and these practices can be included in the intervention models required by ARRA funding programs. However, the research base on the ARRA intervention models themselves is mixed, at best.

Further, how the practices are selected and implemented matters greatly. An effective practice can be implemented poorly, and promising practices may be mismatched with a school's most pressing challenges, thus not yielding desired results. The congruence and coherence of change practices may make the difference between success and failure.

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26. In over 20 presentations on the Turnaround Practice Guide, to audiences of 30 to 100+ teachers, principals, districts administrators, and State policymakers, these findings were consistently affirmed by meeting participants.

[Whereupon, at 4:49 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

